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FELICITY IN FRANCE.

BY

CONSTANCE ELIZABETH MAUD

*Author of "An English Girl in Paris," "My French Friends," "The
Rising Generation," "Wagner's Heroes," etc., etc.*

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DEDICATED
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TO
FRÉDÉRIC MISTRAL

"il Capoulié" of all who belong to the kingdom of poet-patriots,
whether Félibres of the east or the west, of the north or the
south; he whose spirit of patriotic enthusiasm and poetic
insight, rising like a star in his own beloved land of
Provence, has shed a light throughout the length
and breadth of France, embodying in his vital
personality and in his poetic creations
all that is noblest and most stimu-
lating in patriotism

Three of the chapters, *i.e.*, "The Children's Purgatory," "A Father of his People," and "Among the Félibres," have already appeared in slightly altered form in the *Fortnightly Review* and *Monthly Review* respectively.

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FELICITY IN FRANCE.

FAIR FRANCE.

FROM Newhaven to Dieppe. From England to France. From the sordid ugliness and unspeakable dreariness of the English sea-coast town, to the bright, picturesque liveliness of the old French seaport. Between the two a gulf is fixed, a gulf that must be crossed on a narrow inconvenient little screw steamer which in bad weather—and no day in the year is secure against bad weather—pitches, rolls and tosses, till soul and body are nearly wrenched asunder. This is the price you must pay if you would cross to Normandy or Brittany.

ACROSS
THE
CHANNEL.

On a calm summer's night, however, one may forget the hard unyielding deck chair or narrow wooden seat, and the absence of cushion or pillow, not to be had on deck for love or money, to soften the rigours of the journey. There is at least fresh air to breathe, the star-lit sky overhead, the deep, still waters around flecked with a white track of foam as the boat cuts her way through. The starry worlds overhead come so near their very atmosphere may be felt. The noisy work-a-day world recedes far away.

FELICITY IN FRANCE.

AUNT
ANNE.

Most people on board had curled themselves up and gone to sleep, but Aunt Anne and I agreed that such a night must not be wasted.

We were bound for Trouville *via* Newhaven and Dieppe, having settled that ten days of real hot sun and ozone-laden sea breezes would be the best stirrup cup on starting for our tour in Fair France. As to the next step we had no fixed plans, except to go south. "The vine country for the *vendange*," was our programme, and Aunt Anne suggested that this, united with life in a convent perched on a vine-clad hill, would ideally fulfil her need for perfect rest.

For Aunt Anne said she needed "a complete rest"! Her family, namely, only son and his wife, had declared for that form of dissipation a chaperon would be absolutely necessary. I wanted to see a real harvest, not a half-hearted, resigned, "might-'a-been-worse" sort of affair, but the real thing, which can only be got in a land loved of the sun. I suggested that if France would supply the quality of rest for which Aunt Anne's soul thirsted, who better than I could fulfil the delicate office of chaperon—I, who, to complete my outfit, needed an Aunt!

I must mention that Aunt Anne is a grandmother, though as yet of only one Person. A Person, however, of considerable importance, a sun round whom revolve many satellites, whose will is law, at whose lightest frown a robust member of Parliament trembles and grovels even as one of her ministers before the Empress of China. Aunt Anne's devotion and adoration for this autocratic young Person are a byword, and she quotes the sayings and opinions of this three-year-old Victoria Beatrice, rightly shortened into "Trix" or "Vix," as though she were an honoured ancestor. Greatly as I

also feel her fascination, had Victoria-Beatrice elected to join our party I dared not have attempted the office of chaperon.

A GRAND-
MOTHER.

In spite of being a grandmother, Aunt Anne is not an old lady with white hair, lace cap and spectacles, as some might suppose. She is slight and active even to the point of athletic, her hair is dark, with a gun-metal shade, and curls crisply all over her head. Her eyes dance with mischief, on occasions, notably on solemn occasions, like a school boy's. Aunt Anne is, in fact, a curious compound of an abnormally intelligent and active boy of sixteen and an exceedingly dignified, stately and somewhat sarcastic little lady of sixty. Never did anyone more unscrupulously trade on her "old age," as it pleases her to designate the three score years which sit so lightly on her. They do not really sit on her at all, nothing and no one ever could sit on Aunt Anne, rather does she carry her years as a clever fencer his foil, now to assail, now to protect. She uses them as a cloak, a subterfuge, a reason, an excuse, a trump card invariably.

Her dress is always just right. She has mastered that art by the observance of the golden rule of wearing what is suitable for the occasion. Without being marked or peculiar her clothes bear a strong stamp of her own individuality. Well-cut plain tailor-made skirts and straight coats for travelling and country wear; a hat with no nonsense about it, designed to cover the head and shade the face, a dignified hat; carefully gloved and shod, an air well-groomed and trim—"toujours à quatre-épingles"—that is Aunt Anne.

* * * * *

Accompanied by her little German maid Gertruda,

CHOPPY
SEAS.

Aunt Anne had met me at Victoria Station on a grey, chilly day in the middle of August. Before getting into the train we glanced at the telegrams of the Channel crossings. To my dismay I read :

"Dover—Sea choppy, crossing moderate."

"Folkestone—Ground swell, wind rising, crossing indifferent."

"Newhaven—Rising wind, sea agitated, crossing rough."

Aunt Anne has no objection to choppy seas and contrary winds, but I object to them very much, and as a chaperon am not only utterly useless at the time being, but also for some while after. On arriving at Newhaven we had consulted two guards, a ship's steward, and three "blue jerseys" who suggested familiarity with the waves. They one and all united in the opinion that we would "have it a bit roughish" if we crossed at midday, but the three blue jerseys staked their reputations that the wind was veering round and the sea would be mild as a mill-pond for the midnight crossing.

Aunt Anne magnanimously agreed to wait and cross by the night boat. We killed time with difficulty. Was ever such a God-forsaken place as Newhaven ! Its depressing dreariness quelled for the time the usual buoyant patriotism of Aunt Anne, and gave me a chance for illustrating some of my theories as to the kill-joy spirit animating English country towns and villages. No smiling yellow sands, no gay *plage* greet you at Newhaven. The waters break grimly against the grey sea wall of the harbour. The town itself, sordid and dreary, is some distance inland. For nearly a mile we walked past rows of dingy grey cottages, down an inky, stony, asphalt road. Dirty, ill-kept,

ill-fed children swarmed on the doorsteps ; not a blade of grass, not a flower to be seen. In the town same spirit of grey dulness, relieved only by squalid little shops and frequent public-houses. In vain we enquired for a tea-shop of any sort. The poor belated foreigner who finds himself with three or four hours on his hands at Newhaven must feel he has landed in a sad and sorry country indeed. "A people who neither dance nor sing, nor even pray save once a week. Of course the church locked ! No market-place, no sign of human fellowship and intercourse, except in the evil glittering public-house." So I grumbled on to Aunt Anne. She turned and fixed me with her long lorgnettes.

A SORRY
AND
SORDID
TOWN.

"You want your five o'clock tea, Felicity—that is what is the matter with you, my dear. You see all *en noir*. We will take a carriage and drive over to Seaford. At least there is a fine beach where we can watch the waves and get some tea."

But the only two conveyances in Newhaven were "out," and Newhaven could do nothing more to help us than suggest our waiting till one of them returned, which "might be any time."

* * * * *

Happily our three "blue jerseys" had prophesied truly. The wind dropped as the tide turned, the sea was "like a mill-pond" as we went on board at midnight.

Silently and swiftly we moved across the deep, still waters. All the world slept save the moon, which sailed across the sky chasing little fleecy clouds before her, white as the foam of the tiny waves we left in our track.

At 3 a.m. we entered the narrow waterway of

A FAIR
DAWN.

Dieppe, and glided noiselessly into the harbour. A faint rose streak shot across the east. Not a sound arose from the quay and town. Not a sign of life on the fishing-boats and steamers anchored in the motionless waters.

Nearly all the passengers on landing vanished like the morning mist, hurried away by the waiting trains with a thin scream of farewell, borne off to Paris, Rouen, Le Havre.

A sleepy *cocher* drove us to our hotel on the *plage*.

And every moment the rose streak in the east spread wider, and the unseen Artist-hand mixed new colours, shades now subtle and delicate as those of the dragon-fly's wing, now vivid as the maple leaf in autumn, till all the sky and sea were flooded with the dawn. If a sunrise over the sea were only on view once in seven years, who would be found sleeping that night!

* * * * *

The strong morning sun permitted no more rest to the drowsiest traveller after eight o'clock. He simply insisted on the green *persiennes* being flung wide, and in he rushed, filling the room with midsummer gladness.

A little note on my dressing-table informed me that Aunt Anne had already escaped the vigilance of her chaperon, and, with Gertruda, gone out to look round the place. I would find her probably on the beach.

An hour later, fortified by a cup of excellent *café au lait* and crisp "*petits pains*," I went in search of my charge. All the world was out by now. It was a gay scene on the *plage*. "*Messieurs et mesdames les baigneurs*," and the neat white-aproned *bonnes* with their small charges, either taking a morning bath or

watching others doing so, for the tide was at its height and the sparkling sea looked full as a brimming cup. I thought of Newhaven! Was it three hours or three weeks we had travelled?

AT HIGH
TIDE.

Rows of umbrella tents of red and white striped canvas supplied shade from the dazzling sun, and here nurses and parents sat with an eye on the children building their castles and dykes and paddling in and out of the water.

Among these tents I wandered, seeking everywhere for Aunt Anne, but in vain. Suddenly a little voice accosted me from under a big white mushroom hat at the entrance of a tent.

"*Bitte sehr, Fraulein*"—the mushroom rose—it was Gertruda. Her mistress had left her in charge of the bathing tent and had gone into the water.

"Far, very far is she gone, I see her not more," sighed Gertruda mournfully. "To follow the gracious lady dare I not, to go with she has forbidden me. Seek her, I pray you, Fraulein."

I inquired whether her mistress could swim.

"*Ach ja*, the gracious lady was even as a *fischlein* in the water; but her *sortie-de-bain* she had it not, and how to do when Gertruda must not leave the tent!"

I undertook to find the gracious lady, and take her the long white cloak. I felt reassured on the score of Aunt Anne's safety at all events while in the water, by the numerous evidences of precaution to be seen on all sides. Belts floated on the glistening smooth waters, a rope railing divided each partition for *les messieurs, les dames, and les infants*, while two stout lifeboats with ladders attached reassured the venture-some swimmer, who, having taken a dozen strokes,

THE
"PLAGE."

found himself out of his depth and liable to be overtaken by faint-heartedness.

Up and down that *plage* I wandered, seeking both in and out of the water for the missing Aunt Anne, but, like the despondent Gertruda, I found her not.

All sorts and sizes of bathers disported themselves in the dancing sun-warmed waves. Large *pères de famille*, like portly zebras, comfortable smiling *mères de famille*, waddled in, a baby on one arm and a two-year-old clinging to the other. Long skinny boys and girls made their first struggling essay at swimming under the auspices of appointed professors of the art, amphibious beings in oilskin jackets and straw hats shading their wrinkled, tanned faces.

No *élégants* of either sex were on view. Their *châlets* and villas are further west, no doubt at Étretat and Trouville.

More English than French greeted my ears as I strolled along, and good strong cockney more frequently than English.

Serious qualms assailed me about Aunt Anne. She intended I knew to go to the market after her bathe; but though she is no slave to conventionality, I felt that without at least her *sortie-de-bain* she was unlikely to be there. Knowing her magnetic power of attraction for children, and above all for those difficult and usually unapproachable beings termed "infants in arms," I carefully inspected every group of children, and peered into any half-open tent containing a *nourrice*. I passed a circle of eager shrieking boys and girls piling up a huge mound of sand, which suggested beneath it a human form. "Work, work—faster, faster—or the giant will not be buried before the sea arrives," they shouted. My

heart stood still as I drew near, and saw a head sticking out of one side of the mountain. "Aunt Anne, is it you?" I gasped; but at that moment a violent earthquake revealed a tall, dark-haired French boy, who rose and shook off the sand, crying, "I live yet, and now I revenge myself."

LOST
AUNT
ANNE.

With a deep sigh of relief I walked on. Perhaps she had taken a boat and gone fishing! I sat down and gazed out to sea. Presently I became interested in three slight figures taking headers from one of the lifeboats. They were too far off for me to see their faces, but their gestures were highly entertaining. The shortest of the three was in black, the other two were tightly encased in blue and white stripes. The black one kept time as one by one they raised high their arms and plunged in head foremost. If either of the zebras hesitated after the signal had been given, the inexorable black one pushed the falterer overboard. Splashing, spluttering, and disgraced, he then climbed into the boat, and the performance recommenced.

I forgot all about Aunt Anne so absorbed did I become in this pantomime. At last they stood up together, and, "one two three and away," dived simultaneously beneath the water. One by one the black heads reappeared and the three struck out for the shore. "I back the little black fellow," I said to myself, and in my excitement walked forward to have a look at the race. Suddenly I fell back in a helpless heap on the sand. Aunt Anne stood dripping and laughing before me.

"Pas mal, mes enfants—Pas mal du tout. C'est Jules qui gagne—non, c'est Alphonse! Courage—Bravo," she cried. "Au revoir chers enfants—

TOUJOURS
DE
L'AUDACE.

n'oubliez pas—comme disait Danton, 'Il faut de l'audace—encore de l'audace—toujours de l'audace.'"

The boys grinned shyly and murmured many thanks and "*Au revoir, Madame.*"

"You have found some friends?" I asked.

"Never saw 'em before in my life, but as you know I always find friends, my dear. I have had a most interesting time and seen so much this morning. I found these boys clinging to the steps of the lifeboat, the boatman urging them to plunge in, their native prudence getting the better of their desire to follow his advice. I took them in hand. Did you see the result? We are as proud of ourselves as if we had swum the channel, and to-morrow *papa* and *maman* and *grand'-maman* from the villa up there, will witness the performance, and our cup of pride will be full."

We returned to Gertruda and the tent, and Aunt Anne's toilette accomplished, went off to the market. In the Place Nationale another gay and busy scene was going on, for it was Saturday morning and all the country-side had come in early with their fresh golden butter, new-laid eggs, and produce of garden and orchard. Many a good dame had also by her side the latest fatted chicken or duck peering enquiringly and anxiously over the lid of his basket.

Flowers of every hue, carnation lily, rose, gladiola and the lovely blue hydrangea, made gorgeous patches of colour between the stalls of green vegetables and fruit. Peaches, luscious and sun-warmed, were to be had for two sous. Delicious little green grapes at 50 *centimes* a pound, and greengages, not the insipid plum that in England assumes the name, but real greengages with the russet patch on one cheek which betokens the ardent kiss of the sun, that same sun who

looks so coldly on our poor England that he refuses even to ripen her grapes or sweeten her peaches, though she is but an hour's journey across the water. But then he is the lover of "la belle France," and alas but a bowing acquaintance of "la Grande Bretagne."

A FRENCH
MARKET.

We filled the capacious string bag which Gertruda carried with fruit and flowers, and, our choice directed by an old lady with a face like a roasted apple we partook of peaches and nectarines fit for the gods. Aunt Anne and the old lady were soon deep in agricultural questions, for the former has a farm of her own at home and knows what she is talking about, as the old Frenchwoman soon recognised.

From the raising of chickens and ducks they passed by a natural sequence to children, and the discovery that each was the proud possessor of a single grandchild cemented a friendship on the spot. The Frenchwoman declared hers to be "*bien assez pour le moment*," being the joy and the torment of about six grown persons. Aunt Anne said, "Get another, my good friend—get seven more as quickly as possible. One child alone receives too much care. For me I trust my daughter will give me ten grandchildren." I wished Victoria-Beatrice could have heard her thus lightly talking of hated rivals.

"Ah, but ten, *mon Dieu!* Madame has no doubt wherewith to nourish them, but for we others, we have enough with one to feed, to educate and to *doter* her well see you," said the old lady. "One must be prudent and think of the future."

Leaving the two to deal with this intricate question, which Gertruda was endeavouring to follow, not only with the idea of improving her French, but also gaining light on a problem with which the future

ST.
JACQUES.

might confront her, I strolled across the Place into the ancient church of St. Jacques. It stands always open, a cool haven of refuge from the busy noise and glare outside. At all hours of the day the white-capped peasant women enter for a few minutes, basket on arm, and kneel in one or other of the small side chapels.

Just inside the entrance there hangs an old gilded statue of the Madonna and Child. Beneath it runs the inscription "Notre Dame de bon port," and below is a sadly suggestive little alms box, "Tronc pour la sépulture des noyés." How many a Norman fisherwoman must have wept and prayed at this spot!

From a stained glass window behind the altar the light streamed mellow and soft. It was not a very fine work of art if viewed near, but the golden light suited the subject which Giotto's fresco in Santa Maria Novella has immortalised, and one recalled the fresco while looking at the window. St. Joachim and Ste. Anne meeting at the Golden Gate—an aged couple greeting each other at the Gate of Paradise; behind them the dark valley, the clouds and night.

To how many has this *bon port* been the only one they were ever destined to reach!

But the steadfast faith of the poor fisherwoman leads her step by step to this good harbour. When her man departs for the dangers of the *gran' pêche* she prays to "Notre Dame de bon port" to intercede for his safe return. When his boat comes no more home, she drops her hard-earned sous into the *tronc* and prays for the sweet repose of his soul, and through her tear-dimmed eyes she sees afar the Golden Gate where all faithful lovers surely meet again.

" 'Sleeps after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life, does greatly please,' "

A CRAB
VENDOR.

spoke a low voice at my side.

I turned. Aunt Anne's eyes, raised to the window, were full of tears.

* * * * *

The fish market, a large covered hall, is on the quay. From five to seven every morning the sailing boats come back like laden bees to the hive, and a crowd of expectant, eager women help to carry the fish into the market.

By eight o'clock a brisk trade is doing, every woman crying her wares at the pitch of her voice as she sits perched up behind her stall; above her head a board, on which is painted her name, and sometimes a picture of the family boat.

A stream of purchasers walked up and down, enquiring prices and weighing critically the still kicking lobsters and crabs, poking invidiously at the long slimy eels, enormous flat skate, the turbot, sea-wolf, red mullet, etc. The arts both of buying and selling are brought to a fine point, often a regular three-act comedy is enacted before the bargain is concluded.

Aunt Anne and I drew up opposite the stall of Madame Aimable Poncelot as her board announced her. We had sent Gertruda and the string bag back to the hotel. A stout, bustling, *femme de ménage*, basket on arm, halted opposite some fine crabs. Instantly Madame Poncelot made ready for the fray.

"You desire some crabs, my little lady? Ah! but you have luck to-day, see you! Nowhere in the market can you find the crabs to equal these. See, there, this one! A pound and a half he weighs. I leave him to you for a little nothing of thirty-five sous."

A GOOD
BARGAIN.

"How then ! But you mock yourself of me. *Dame !* You take me for a little girl from the country ! This miserable one who has the air besides of being dead as the whale of Jonah !"

"Dead ?" shrieked the indignant Madame Poncelot. "Judge then all the world who passes. Here is a fine crab, active as the devil, yet this lady swears to me he is dead as the whale of Jonah ! Hold him you, Madame, I pray you."

She handed the crab to Aunt Anne, pinching the unfortunate sharply, which he resented by kicking out endless legs and claws. Aunt Anne fearlessly took hold of the beast. "One must be just, Madame," she said severely to the customer, "the hour of death has not yet arrived for that crab."

"Haha, my brave boy, thou art finely dead indeed ! Give him your finger, my little lady, and see how dead are his pincers."

The stout lady felt herself worsted. She looked as if it would be a real pleasure to boil down Aunt Anne together with the crab.

"Madame will do well to buy him herself," she said. "In England no doubt one eats gladly dead crabs—I leave him to Madame." She turned to the lobsters and began examining them, reassured by the laugh that greeted her last sally. We had a large audience round us by this time. Each one contributed a remark, while Aunt Anne, feeling her patriotism roused, gave them such a picture of the fish caught on the English coast as must have prompted a lively desire to poach in British waters.

Meanwhile, Madame Poncelot, wrapping up the crab, resignedly handed him over, merely observing with a shrug, "*Dame !* one is ruined at this cursed

trade." With renewed energy she then turned to fresh customers.

A VICTIM
OF
MESSRS.
COMBES
AND CO.

At another stall a black-robed Sister was buying skate. A skate always suggests to me the victim of cold murder. He is terrible enough as he lies there on his face, with the horribly suggestive dark red spots on his broad flat back and long rat's tail; but it is nothing to the shock he gives you when, on being turned over, he confronts you with that almost human countenance of ghastly pallor and hideous misery.

The nun, however, seemed to experience no emotion of any kind. With stony indifference she took up one corpse after the other. "He is large it is true, but see you the body is thin," she remarked in disparaging tones of an enormous specimen, whose destiny was probably to feed a convent full. "I give three francs, no more."

And in spite of the Holy Virgin and all the saints being called upon to witness that Madame Cotelette had paid for that superb fish four francs fifty but an hour before at the auction outside, the Sister walked off with the skate in her net bag at her own figure.

"A miserable affair—a price for rotten fish. But there, what would you," observed Madame Cotelette to her neighbours. "The old Combes he robs them, the unhappy ones, of all their goods, and chases them from their houses—one must not be hard on them!"

"Make to pay well instead the next fat little *bourgeoise*! *Hein, amie Cotelette?*" laughed a neighbour.

"Monsieur Combes' policy does not seem to meet with the sympathy of these honest fisher folk. I like that woman—I think I will buy some of her fish," said Aunt Anne.

THE FISH
AUCTION.

Here, however, the chaperon put her foot down firmly and hurried her charge away.

But though she was steered safely out of the market hall, she came to a determined stand outside, where exciting business was doing in the sale of fish by auction. Fishermen and market-women stood in rings round the various auctioneers, the fish spread in lots on the ground in their midst. The auctioneers yelled out the prices in descending scale though ever ascending tones. "*Quatre-vingt-quinze sous—Quatre-vingt-dix,*" etc. An imperceptible movement, the twitch of an eyelid or a finger, and the lot was yours.

Aunt Anne was soon in the inner circle, and before the chaperon could interfere she had three dozen red mullet knocked down to her. A copper-coloured seaman politely assisted her to gather up the haul, and another presented us with a copy of *La Patrie* in which to carry them. The paper of *La Patrie* was very thin and the red mullet very damp. I said nothing, but silently wondered where Gertruda would pack them, and thanked heaven they were not live lobsters or crabs. Presently Aunt Anne observed, with sparkling eyes:

"I knew perfectly well what I was about, Felicity, my dear. You need not look at me in that tone of voice. I am going to give them to those dear babies playing at a dinner party over there with empty oyster shells. One of them has eyes that remind me of Victoria Beatrice when she is up to mischief."

The babies shrieked as if it were raining sovereigns when we dropped the shower of red fish in their midst. Two large, bony, bare-armed ladies standing by, regarded the scene grimly, and I heard one mutter: "*En voilà deux joliment folles!*"

We got back to the hotel just in time to take a hurried *déjeuner* and catch the train for Le Havre, and on reaching Trouville that evening, both felt we had not done badly for our first day of perfect rest.

END OF
FIRST
DAY.

THE CHILDREN'S PARADISE.

LE PETIT
ROI.

TROUVILLE is the children's Paradise. In England we hear of it as a fashionable watering place. Trouville races, Trouville costumes of "latest cry," the Casino and its entertainments. But go to Trouville and you will soon find, as Aunt Anne and I did, that the chief feature of the place, the one which puts all others in the background, is the children.

Life at Trouville is planned out for their convenience and enjoyment; this is their *plage*, and on the wide golden sands they are encamped under their red and white striped tents and big scarlet umbrellas like a Lilliputian army. From the *châlets*, villas and hotels all along the coast they emerge the first thing in the morning accompanied by their neat white-aproned *bonnes* and gaily-ribboned *non-nous*, armed with spades, buckets and fishing nets for the day's work.

Aunt Anne and I had the good fortune to see life from the *châlet* of some Anglo-French friends instead of the big dulness of an hotel. The centre round which we all revolved in that household, the mainspring regulating our every action, was a small person of three spring-times, usually designated "*le petit roi*," and nobly carrying out the regal idea from the time he opened his big brown eyes in the early, usually very early, morning, to the time he was persuaded to close them at night.

His parents, like those of all the other Lilliputians, found themselves at Trouville primarily in order to watch the pale slender little Parisian growing browner and sturdier day by day.

LIFE
"AL-
FRESCO."

Incidentally they themselves took the baths of the sea, promenaded on the planks stretching the length of the *plage* (the fashionable walk), and interchanged a friendly unceremonious hospitality among each other at their several villas and *châlets*. Most of these, like the one in which we stayed, with high sloping roofs, pointed gables, balconies and verandahs, fringing the *plage* and facing seawards. Ideal summer houses, spotlessly clean and fresh, the rooms *en suite* giving a feeling of space and airiness on the hottest day.

The healthy outdoor life showed quite as beneficial an effect on Madame, our charming little hostess, tired out with the ceaseless whirl of the Paris season, as on her small son. In her cool dainty costumes of white linens and embroidered muslins she looked ten years younger than a few weeks before at the "Grand Prix."

As to Monsieur le Comte he found himself extending the week he had intended as the limit of his stay, and filling up his time without any difficulty for a month, with a swim in the morning, motoring in the afternoon, and a *partie carrée* of bridge in the evening.

The Casino rarely saw our host and hostess or their set, except at the hour of the band in the afternoon, and on rare occasions when a good opera was given in the evening.

For those who liked it there was *la pêche*, but few, except Aunt Anne, who did the thing in professional style with a fishing smack and an ancient mariner, seemed to have any taste for that branch of

THE
LILLI-
PUTIANS.

"*le sport*." Catching crabs on the "Roches Noires" when the tide went down was the only really popular form of fishing at Trouville. It suited equally well both *le petit roi* and his father, and I also found much entertainment in it without the painful drawbacks which accompanied fishing with Aunt Anne. The word of *le petit roi* was law on these occasions. Monsieur le Comte saw his new Panama converted into a fish basket, and I my handkerchief commandeered for the even baser purpose of a sieve, without either of us venturing a remonstrance.

But the *plage* at *l'heure du bain* was the time for seeing *le petit roi* and his fellow Lilliputians in their glory. Groups of busy builders and architects were dotted all over the sands, working away as if their *déjeuner* depended upon it. Castles, fortresses, dungeons, dykes rose up every morning as if by magic. From the umbrella-tents bathers of every size, giant and pigmy, turned out in every variety of costume. Tiny creatures paddled in and out of the waters with as keen delight in the little warm waves as Kingsley's Water-babies. Their costumes were ideal, being equally suitable for land or water, laddie or lassie. One little trio, special friends of mine, all far less in height than my parasol, were clad entirely in scarlet—jerseys, knickerbockers and caps of the same bright poppy colour. Their small bare legs and feet showed brown as coffee berries, and their short curls became crisper and curlier the more they were sprayed with the salt sea.

They owned the names Simone, Georges, and Lizette, but which was which no one save their mother could possibly tell. They chattered incessantly in most fluent and finished French, talked all together and

gave directions to which none attended, but they never quarrelled and never cried. They were the embodiment of the joy of living and working.

WATER
BABIES.

The babies in the water were just as happy. Here a small boy rode astride on his father's back like an infant Triton on a dolphin. The mother dolphin following with encouraging applause, and the small boy shrieking with delight as they rose over the gently swelling waves.

Further on, a lady gave careful injunctions to her two tall boys as they took off their long white cloaks and left them at her feet. With her lorgnettes she watched to see they followed well her counsels to be prudent. They swim out to a floating raft, and then comes the supreme moment, as one after another, they stand arms raised and take the desperate plunge.

"*Ah, mon Dieu !*" cries the mother involuntarily, and gives a sigh of profound relief as the black heads reappear.

Presently one of the sons returns to his mother with the reassuring news that all goes well, and the water is not cold. She begs he will not remain in more than a little quarter of an hour, and he returns to the perils of the sea; for this one is a daring spirit, and has twice to be recalled to the boundary by the watchman in the lifeboat. As at Dieppe, the precautions taken were so numerous that no one could drown if he tried.

Aunt Anne was leading a set of lancers, water-lancers, a gay party, presently joined by two elegant ladies who walked down from a villa, accompanied by their maid. Their costumes represented the "last cry" of sea fashion, fine black nun's veiling, (what an irony in

THE EVIL
"TOQUÉ."

the name!), a long tunic with short sleeves and V shaped neck, black silk stockings and sandals, and, as a finishing touch, round their heads were wound bright scarlet handkerchiefs, tied in a coquettish knot. Shrieks of welcome greeted them from Aunt Anne's lively little party of bathers, men and women, and, the lancers over, all devoted themselves to the task of assisting a very portly lady of their number to float. No one had ventured further in the water than their waists, and, in spite of Aunt Anne's encouraging cries of "Courage, courage, *ma chère madame*," the fat lady insisted on keeping one foot on *terra firma*, which perhaps accounted for the difficulty the waves seemed to have in floating her. Everyone appeared, however, to get a good deal of amusement, if not exercise, out of the entertainment.

My sea and sun bath had been brought to an untimely end earlier in the day by an evil beast who lurks in the sand all along the northern French coast—the "*toqué*" by name. He stabs the unwary who venture to bathe without sandals, in the sole of the foot. Suddenly and swiftly does he smite, conveying to his victim the impression of having all at once a badly sprained ankle. With difficulty I limped to shore. Gertruda enlightened me after examining my foot.

"*Liber Himmel*, *Fraulein*, but it is the evil '*toqué*.'"
A donkey boy standing near offered his services and much wise counsel.

"*Mademoiselle* must not swear," he said, earnestly. (I was groaning only!) "She must, on the contrary, quickly repeat an Ave to the Blessed Virgin and a Paternoster. With that the poison will commence to pass—but, above all, *mademoiselle* must not swear or it is finished for her."

"Fraulein must bathe the wound with ammonia without delay, I run to the *pharmacie* directly," said the practical Gertruda. Whether it was the ammonia, speedily fetched by Gertruda, or the Ave devoutly repeated for me by the donkey boy, I do not pretend to say, but the pain soon began to lessen.

A YOUNG
NAPO-
LEON.

Seated under a big umbrella planted in the sand, I watched *le petit roi* holding his court in the neighbouring tent.

He was full of importance, for he had three slaves all to himself that morning—abject, devoted slaves, his nurse Marie, his mother's maid Hortense, and Gertruda, annexed from Aunt Anne's tent. In an intermittent way they each attempted a little needlework, but laid it aside instantly to do the king's bidding, whether commanded to dig, fill a bucket, lay down and be buried, or sit up and be climbed upon.

The habit of command has grown with *le petit roi* since his cradle days. At three years old it is as thoroughly engrained as in Louis XI. or Napoleon at their prime. He possesses all the caprice and fertile imagination of the former, combined with the personal magnetism and indomitable will of the latter. Every one with whom he comes in contact falls (metaphorically) flat on their faces. Among all his acquaintance and companions, the winds and the waves alone refuse to obey him. Their rebellion daily fills the soul of the king with surprise and indignation. The blundering obtuseness of the boisterous ill-mannered wind, unable even to take in his displeasure, specially excites his wrath. Again and again would the fellow repeat his clumsy joke of blowing off the king's big sailor hat and carrying away his picture book. The waves, impudent little fellows, he could put up with

THE
SLAVES.

better, for at least he could see and touch them, though rarely would they pay the least attention to the royal edict either in hastening or delaying their tide. Still, when they chose, they could be amusing enough, and the king would shriek with delight as they raced after his little pink toes.

The sun blazed down on the camp, the yellow sands glistened as if flecked with diamond dust, but the king spared not his slaves because of noonday heat. He commanded a hole to be dug "deep, but deep," so that he could sail all his royal ships in the waters, when the waves, running up the dyke which led to the sea, had filled it.

The three slaves set to work with energy. They were big, strong, and intelligent, though not as quick in the up-take as his majesty desired. By fits and starts he lent a hand himself, working like a little steam engine.

All at once, with Louis-like caprice, his idea changed. He commanded the work to cease, and the broadest backed of the three slaves to turn herself on hands and knees into a horse. Mounting this charger he stood upright and took flying leaps into the hole. This performance he repeated till it began to pall. "Ha, this shall be my tomb! I will be buried alive here with 'Truda! She shall be my wife,'" cried the king, as a new idea struck him. "Jump thou, as me I jumped," he commanded.

The favourite of that morning obeyed and jumped in, without, however, first mounting the patient charger. This excited the king's wrath, and he administered a vigorous thumping with both little brown fists, while the gentle good-natured slave laughed and kissed the hands that beat her. "Pardon, pardon, my little

king. Ah, but thou art not kind for thy poor Gertruda," she remonstrated.

THE GOOD
FÉE GRÀ-
NI.

"Naughty, I love thee no more," replied his majesty sternly. "Take thyself out of my tomb, I will be buried alone. I will not have thee—I will have no wife. Are stupid all the wives."

"Eh, but I should like to hear that again," said a voice which caused the king to pause and look up. As his eyes met those of Aunt Anne he seemed somewhat discomfited.

"Va-t'en, Gràni, va-t'en," he observed curtly, addressing her by the name he had once learnt from his friend Trixie.

"*Comment?* Is it so one addresses '*la bonne fée Gràni*'? Forget not, *petit roi*, that he who chases the good fairies is left to the naughty ones," said Aunt Anne warningly.

With an air of assumed indifference the king turned to his slaves. "I will that one fills the hole quick—quick. I will be buried alive—but not the head," he said, imperiously.

"Does one not say 'if you please' when one would be buried alive?" enquired Aunt Anne in her most insinuating tones. "The beautiful little Victoria-Trixie of whom I so often remind thee, says always 'if you please.'"

The king shot a suspicious glance at her. This Gràni was more difficult to deal with than the disobedient winds and waves. The three slaves waited slave-like to see what cue they should follow.

"Don't like the beautiful little Victoria-Trixie. Don't wish to say please," observed the king at last, shortly.

"Thou dost not wish to say please? Eh, well, then

GRÂNI
VIC-
TORIOUS.

my poor little king, I, the good fairy Grâni, will cause these three demoiselles and their three spades to be incapable of moving till thou shalt say, 'If you please my kind friends Julie, Mathilde, and Gertruda, assist me to be buried in this fine tomb!'"

"Ha-ha! It is not Julie and Mathilde, it is Marie and Hortense. Thou art not true fairy!—the fairies they know all things," cried the king triumphantly.

For a moment I thought Aunt Anne's ascendancy toppling, but she righted herself. The grandmother of a Victoria-Beatrice was not to be so easily worsted.

"Is it possible that these poor creatures, bruised with fatigue and scarlet with heat, are indeed those fine girls, Marie, thy good nurse, and the gentle Hortense? So changed, so disfigured! Alas, what hast thou caused them to suffer! Come here, my poor girls, sit in the shade. Not another stroke of work shall you do. We will make you armchairs of the sand, the little king and I. The poor 'Truda also—her condition is pitiable. Repose yourselves."

"*Mais non, mais non,*" began the outraged majesty, his brows contracting and eyes lowering.

"*Mais oui, mais oui.* Since it is I, the Grâni, who say it." Aunt Anne's tones were strangely quiet as compared with those which generally fell on the king's ears. Whether it was this impressive quiet, or some other subtle quality, I cannot say, but before he or any of us knew how it came to pass, the tyrant was working away even as the meanest of his slaves, scooping out three fine seats with Aunt Anne, who not only directed but laboured vigorously herself, signing to the maids to remain inactive and allow themselves to be waited upon.

When the work was finished and all three were installed in comfort, the king flung down his spade, and, looking at Aunt Anne, enquired, in a subdued voice:

"The Grânis, are they all more great than the kings?—yes?"

"One Grannie is more great than all the kings, big and little, on the earth. She knows more, seest thou." The voice carried conviction. And from that time if anything had to be done with *le petit roi*, his parents always appealed to Aunt Anne.

* * * * *

Once a week there was a *bal d'enfants* at the Trouville Casino, an occasion on which the villas and chalets lent their patronage, and the Lilliputians, in the daintiest and finest white garments, appeared in full strength.

BAL D'EN-
FANTS.

It was a broiling day, but this in no way affected the spirit of the ball. The company began to arrive about half-past two o'clock, taking their places all round the big salon. Two cavaliers, about eleven and twelve years old, in white sailor suits with blue collars, sat in the front row, an empty place between them, and an expression of eager expectancy on their faces. Presently they sprang to their feet with a glad "*Ah! la voilà!*" Both rushed forward and seized the hands of a dainty little person with very short, much befrilled white skirts, and the prettiest of little brown legs appearing above her white socks and shoes. Her hair, curly and brown, was tied on one side just above her ear, with a tiny Velasquez bow of white ribbon. But it was her nose which explained and justified the attitude of the two sailors. A tip-tilted distracting little nose, with something

THE
RIVALS.

between a dimple and a dent perched just on the tip. In her wake followed another swain, some two inches less than herself. To him she handed her hat as she went off between her two cavaliers. With a look of extreme dejection he turned away to do her bidding, regarding the hat half resentfully. Then suddenly, seeming to remember it was after all *her* hat, he furtively kissed one of the long white ribbons as he placed it in safety, and flew back with all speed like a moth to the light.

Her fan she used for herself and her three adorers with much tact and equity: he of the white ribbon standing boldly in front of her and braving the undisguised looks of discouragement offered to his close proximity by the naval men.

"Thou wilt give me the first dance—yes?" besought the younger of the two, Pierre by name.

"To Georges the first, because seest thou he is the oldest," replied the lady with admirable impartiality.

"But it was I prayed thee first," pleaded Pierre.

"Thou! How then?" struck in Georges indignantly. "Why, already, at the last ball, she promised me—*Va-t'en!*"

"It is with me thou wilt dance the number two, is it not so, Geneviève?" entreated the small boy in front of her.

"Ah, but this is too strong—this little one who does not even know how to valse. Assuredly I am before him. See, his head comes not so high as my shoulder!" Pierre sprang up and placed himself by the side of his rival, who, feeling the disadvantage, instinctively raised himself on tiptoe, an action promptly shown up by both the others.

The dispute waxed hot. "Pierre, thou art not *gentil*

to reproach Lucien that he is little," said Geneviève. A YOUTH-
FUL CIRCE.
"Thou also wert little last summer. One saw this morning by thy bathing costume how much thou hadst gained."

"It is the sun has drawn in my bathing costume," remonstrated Pierre, but in humbled tones, while the others, including the fair Circe herself, laughed gaily. Pierre drew close to her and seized her hand. "Pardon me, Geneviève *chrie*, but give me the second dance," he whispered; "say yes, my little Geneviève."

Geneviève half closed her eyes and looked at him sideways. Her nose dimpled provokingly.

"I will dance with you all three, but me I will choose the dance for each one. I will make no more promises. All this it bores me."

The band struck up a polka, there was a general rushing to and fro, sorting of partners and shuffling of feet.

"At least thou art mine for this dance," cried Georges triumphantly. Taking possession of her firmly he whirled her away into the dance.

Pierre sighed and looked round for another partner. Placing himself before a tall girl with fair hair, the greatest contrast he could find to his adored, he drew his heels together and bowed. He spoke no word, nor did the lady. She bowed her consent, stood up, and off they went in utmost solemnity.

Lucien sought for no other partner. Sitting down his eyes followed his Circe through the mazes of the dance.

The ball went gaily. By this time the hall was full. The mistress of the ceremonies had collected all the babies, namely those dancers who appeared to be under four years old, in the middle of the room. These

THE
CIRCLE OF
SAFETY.

she formed into a big ring holding each other's hands and moving round, each to his own step and his own time, the only requirement being to keep moving—to "circulate."

Among this company *le petit roi* took his stand, and circulated energetically, with a lordly disregard of time and measure. His mother seated by my side watched his every movement with a glowing pride, which his appearance, in blue velvet and point lace collar, amply justified. Any dancer among the older ones finding partner or dance beyond them, were instantly transferred to this circle of peace and safety. I could not help thinking what an excellent institution it would be in every ball-room. A haven of refuge for the feeble and incompetent, a blessing not only for themselves but for their victims.

The chaperons, whether parents, governesses or nurses, were ranged in the second row, an arrangement which enabled them to keep a watchful eye on their charges in front. The mother of Lucien, who had been absorbed in conversation with the aunt of Geneviève, and had entirely missed the opening scene, now woke up to the fact that her boy was not dancing.

"But how then, *mon chéri*, thou art not dancing this pretty polka?"

"I do not like very much the polka. I prefer to rest tranquil," said Lucien.

"But to rest tranquil when one assists at a ball—that is not the custom," laughed his mother. "See, a little girl arrives over there—she has no cavalier—go ask her to dance."

"Maman, I pray thee do not ask this of me. The next dance I shall dance it with Geneviève. It annoys me to dance with other young girls, seest thou?"

"But thou canst not dance only with Geneviève, my son. Be reasonable." FRENCH
MOTHERS.

"Alas, I know it well," sighed Lucien. His mother leant over and placed her head on his little thin shoulder, her cheek brushed his. "*Mon petit chéri soi donc raisonnable*," she laughed, with a little break in her voice. Did something warn her how often years hence this scene might be rehearsed? A French mother is always the confidante of her son, at every age.

"*Ah, comme je l'adore!*" sighed Lucien.

The aunt of Geneviève overhearing this remark shrugged her shoulders. "That one (looking towards her niece) commences early, hein? A pretty record for nine years old! I must send her to a convent next year." The aunt's real interest was centred, however, in the baby-ring, where her own infant daughter clutched firmly the hand of *le petit roi*. "What an adorable couple is it not?" she asked of all her neighbours.

The polka over, Geneviève returned to her place, cool and dainty as ever, while everyone else looked hot and ruffled. Her eyes were a little brighter, her nose more mischievous and demeriting, that was all. Pierre had already got rid of his tall yellow-haired girl, and, to his brother's obvious annoyance, installed himself on the other side of Geneviève. Lucien darted forward to meet them. Others, boys and girls, joined the group.

The valse was changed. "*La Fischerine*" was substituted for the second dance. A hot discussion took place between Pierre and Lucien. Pierre claimed the dance as his, since Lucien's pretensions rested only on a "first valse." He should have it, the valse,

A FOR-
MIDABLE
RIVAL.

when it arrived, not before. Lucien protested that for the valse he must wait till No. 5. To wait so long, ah, misery, it was not possible for human endurance!

Geneviève looked from one to the other, her pretty forehead wrinkled in perplexity.

"Ah, seest thou," she cried, suddenly brightening. "I will give the first half of 'La Fischerine' to Pierre, and the second half to thee, Lucien, so we shall all be content—yes!"

Neither of her swains appeared content, but they made the best of it perforce. "I at least have the first half," said Pierre, with an ominous look at poor Lucien.

At this moment a dark handsome boy, head and shoulders taller than even Georges, crossed the room, and marching up to Geneviève, bowed his head, threw it back proudly and requested the honour of the next dance. The three already on the field regarded the new arrival darkly. His height made him formidable.

Geneviève answered sweetly. "I can give you a part of the dance if you will, but already I have promised the first half and the last."

"Thousand thanks, Mademoiselle; but me, I am exacting, I require the whole dance for myself alone—even as I shall require my wife for myself alone. I will return later, and hope to be more fortunate."

He bowed again, swept his glance scornfully over his small rivals, and stalked haughtily away. Geneviève called after him, mischievously, "Must not delay too long your return, Monsieur, or I may have but a quarter to offer."

"La Fischerine" is a great favourite. There is so much variety in it. You march in couples proudly

round the hall à la Polonaise. You stop to perform figures with other people's partners, and go through an amusing pantomime with your own, the latter figure giving scope for a great deal of individual sentiment. You dance the valse, schottische and pas de quatre in turn. Geneviève remarked she could dance "La Fischerine" all day and all night—she trusted *le bon Dieu* would have it in Paradise.

LA FISCH-
ERINE.

Pierre laughed. I did not hear his answer, but the partners of Geneviève always laughed, and the effect on those not in that happy position seemed to be very depressing. I noticed Georges dancing just behind her. Silent and gloomy, he performed his duties mechanically, though his partner was one of the prettiest little girls in the room. The tall dark boy, too, appeared almost oblivious of his partner; his eyes sought constantly the small curly head with the knot of white ribbon as it danced in and out of the crowd.

As to Lucien, he counted the minutes and the steps till half the dance should be done. Every time she passed him he looked towards her eagerly. His eyes said: "Now? Is it now—yes?" And as she went by with a little smile and nod which held a promise, he sank back lifelessly.

"La Fischerine" is an interminable dance. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. As time after time she passed him, Lucien felt the heart not only sick but breaking. Slowly the tears rose, no longer could he choke them down, his chest heaved, his throat beat, finally his eyes overflowed.

His mother whispered comfort and hope. Lucien made no reply. As Geneviève passed again, his mother called to her, "And the second half?—Thou art

ISOLDA'S
CUP.

forgetting Lucien. But it is not *gentil*, my little Geneviève."

"*Mais non*, Madame! Indeed I forget not. I try in verity to content all of them, but Pierre, he says the first half is not yet over." Then seeing Lucien's woe, she left her partner swiftly. "Soon I come to thee, Lucien, do not weep," she whispered. Bending her little head, she kissed him lightly, yet tenderly, on the forehead. Her curls fell over him. The boy's face flushed, his eyes shone. He seemed as if he had drunk from Isolda's magic cup.

She was gone again in a flash, but Lucien's tears were gone too. And though he got only a bare three minutes of the Fischerine, owing to the evil machinations of the unscrupulous Pierre, he walked on air for the rest of that afternoon. Only one thing he firmly declined—to be provided with other partners.

Geneviève herself brought up a most attractive little damsel with pink cheeks and a pink sash to match, who looked at Lucien with adoring blue eyes, but he regarded her stonily and shook his head. Even the sight of the blue eyes filling with tears of disappointment was unable to move him.

The tall dark boy stepped in and took his first valse, but he waited doggedly and got a polka all to himself before the end in spite of them all. And when the final procession came, and the curtseys of farewell before the mistress of the ceremonies, Geneviève, instead of the usual one partner, marched up with three, Georges on one side, Lucien on the other and Pierre beyond, for as Geneviève flatteringly pointed out to Pierre, he being so much bigger she could see and speak to him over Lucien's head, whereas Lucien would be hidden on his other side.

PETITS-
CHE-
VAUX.

The mistress of the ceremonies stood at the end of the hall, two magnificent flunkies just behind her holding silver trays of cakes and sugar-sticks, which were handed to each dancer as they passed out.

The last I saw of Geneviève was surrounded by her three cavaliers all pressing their sugar-sticks upon her. Laughing and shaking her head she rejected all, till, for a quiet life, she settled the matter with her usual spirit of equity, by taking a little bite off the end of each. That her small pearl-like teeth had crunched their sugar-sticks, clearly transformed them into magic wands for her three adorers, each carefully placed his away in his pocket, doubtless to transfer it to his pillow at night!

* * * * *

I found Aunt Anne standing at the roulette tables, deep in conversation with two men, one an elderly-looking bourgeois, the other a young man—English by the collar and tie of him.

She had slipped away from the ball at an early stage, declaring she must have fresh air. A children's ball without Victoria-Beatrice was like a Christmas tree without candles. I half suspected the *Petits-Chevaux* would prove too much for her as she passed through the room where *le jeu* was going on.

A crowd surrounded the tables, most of them merely looking on at those playing. Round and round raced the nine little horses unwearyingly, but the stakes were not high, a gold piece was rare. The sensible bourgeois has a better use for his money, with the loss of his second five-franc piece he usually rises and "saves himself." It was a gambler of this judicious type with whom Aunt Anne had entered into conversation just as he wavered between the rash idea, a remnant

AUNT
ANNE'S
COUNSEL.

of his bachelor days he confessed, of trying his luck yet once again, and the prudent one of joining his wife and their little Xavier drinking *siròp de Grenadine* and listening to the band on the terrace outside.

"I lack courage to make the game well since I am married," he was saying to Aunt Anne as I came up. "And you have reason, Madame, the timid should never play."

"That is certain," Aunt Anne assured him. "But your lack of courage is justified, Monsieur. *Le jeu* is not a suitable recreation for a good *père de famille* of a wealth not precisely colossal. He who involves others in the discomfort of his loss should not play."

"Ha, Madame does not approve of *le jeu*—no?"

"Quite to the contrary, Monsieur, given the special conditions needful. The first one being character. To make a good gambler it is necessary to have strength, judgment, equilibrium, coolness, calm, intuition, patience, in fact all the finest qualities of the most highly developed human being. Do you not see this?"

By this time Aunt Anne had, as usual, an audience listening with absorbed attention.

"*Rien ne va plus*," shouted the croupier. She paused.

The young man in front of her had lost again. He looked round. "There would not be much business doing here if we had to pass your tests, Madame," he laughed. "Now I beg you give me your advice, please. I have just lost eleven times on that confounded horse number nine—the devil possesses him to-day. Shall I go on him again?"

"No, my young friend. The devil probably does possess both him and you! When your luck's against you, go home. It's a golden rule. But if you must try

again, stake on Number One. Put on enough—don't be timid," as the young man hesitated between one louis and two.

A MAS-
COTTE.

As the horses whirled round, Aunt Anne's hand rested in motherly fashion on the young man's shoulder.

"Number One gains!" shouted the croupier.

"You are my Mascotte," cried the young man. "I felt I should win this time."

"Make place for me," said the elderly *père de famille*, seating himself once more at the table and taking out five francs: "If Madame will give me a number I too shall gain."

"Aunt Anne," interrupted the chaperon, "I cannot countenance this proceeding any longer. Come away. Tea is ready on the terrace—the others are waiting for you."

"A number, I pray you, Madame, before you quit us," implored the family father.

"Zero!" laughed Aunt Anne as I dragged her away. "Oh, my dear, I have had such an interesting time—well worth the twenty francs I lost."

"Twenty francs! Five o'clock tea for a week! You had better give your purse in my charge," said the practical chaperon.

A BRETON WEDDING.

TRAVEL-
LERS
FROM
FINIS-
TÈRE.

ONE of the many pleasant things about travelling with Aunt Anne is, that you need never make plans beforehand more definite than those of the butterfly or bee. You just go where the sweets of life call you, and flit from one flower to the other as fancy beckons.

One day at Trouville three wild-looking motorists swooped down upon the cool fresh *châlet* just as the shadows lengthened. The dust of Brittany lay thick on them, even to their very eyelids, in spite of masks and goggles. The wild beauty and charm of Brittany, far-away southern Brittany, lay revealed in a portfolio of sketches beneath the dust.

Our travellers had come from the jagged sea coast of Finistère across the *Montagnes Noires*. Carnac, Concarneau, Douarnenez, Quimper, Le Faouët were but names to us who knew not the land; but those sketches, vivid with colour and alive with movement, pictures of wild rocky coasts, of sunny bays and creeks, fishing boats setting out before the dawn, brown and red sails filled with morning breeze, white coifed fisher girls greeting their return in the evening light and unloading the fish on the pier, the dancing of the *riées* on a fête day, and a dozen other scenes from the picturesque life of remote Finistère, determined us.

"We will take Concarneau on our way to Touraine," Aunt Anne announced after a prolonged study of the

chauffeur's maps: "the South Brittany line from Quimper takes you on the direct route to Orléans and Blois."

A SHORT
CUT
ACROSS
COUNTRY.

With characteristic optimism Aunt Anne dwelt on the sunny side of the journey. How to get from Trouville to Concarneau was a problem we left our friends to wrestle with. Nothing could have been kinder than the way in which each one came forward with a fresh suggestion, but after many animated debates in which every one talked at once, our host pronounced, as the conclusion of the matter, "It cannot do itself that journey—absolutely impracticable unless by means of the automobile or the balloon."

Both these conveyances appealed strongly to Aunt Anne, but for sordid practical reasons had to be rejected in spite of the assurance of the motorists that when you had once invested in a car it was a real economy to travel by that means. No railway tickets you see! And then the saving of nervous wear and tear in having no trains to hurry for, no changing and waiting in draughty stations. The gain on all sides was incalculable! A boy guest suggested bicycles. He had made a splendid trip from St. Malo to Quimper in three days. But Aunt Anne, though she could, I am convinced, ride a bicycle with any expert, heroically withstands the temptation, out of consideration for the parents of her grandchild, whose standard for the conduct of the grandmother of Victoria-Beatrice is of an altitude somewhat glacial.

In the end we delivered ourselves over to the tender mercies of the railway company, to be conveyed like dumb driven cattle, and often with as little ceremony, through the length and breadth of the land.

How often we changed trains, how many hours we

GER-
TRUDA.

waited with sinking hearts at desolate railway stations, I will not even try to remember—as profitable to recall a nightmare. Little had we dreamt of the endless possibilities of the French trains if permitted free scope in a cross-country journey. Gertruda, usually our guide and mainstay, gave herself up to blind chance and showed no more activity than our bundle of rugs. She quitted Trouville with regret. The chef and the chauffeur had both proposed to her, and though, owing to a previous engagement, she was unable to accept either, she confessed she found them both “*sehr lebenswurdig*.” Gertruda’s path is strewn with broken hearts, over which she sighs soft regrets, but not, I fear, mingled with the repentance that worketh amendment; rather, like the insatiable walrus and carpenter among the oysters, with sighs and groans she continues to “sort out those of the largest size.”

One peaceful evening we spent at the beginning of our pilgrimage at Mont Saint Michel, which we reached with comparative ease, renewing our recollection of that wonderful incoming tide as it slides up swiftly and silently across the plains of treacherous sand, and of the gorgeously painted sky and sea as the sun goes down: renewing also our acquaintance with the still handsome Madame Cambert and her still incomparable omelettes.

“We must not be beguiled into staying here,” said Aunt Anne in the tone of one who fully realises the temptations held out by that fascinating old town piled at the foot of the great sentinel rock, crowned by the huge buttresses of the grim old monastery and dominating cathedral, and surrounded by the wide wind-swept sea.

“We have a Pardon, a Benediction of the sea, and

a Fête of the *Filets-bleus* to see during the next week, remember."

MADAME
CAMBERT.

So we hardened our hearts against the gentle protests of Madame Cambert. No man could have resisted those soft brown eyes of hers as she said, "But Mesdames, you depart not? Alas! and I who had arranged for you a *déjeuner* of all the favourite dishes of Madame of which I remind myself perfectly—the chicken in his chemise, the blanket of veal, the potatoes jumped. Ah, but I am desolated that these ladies must leave without even eating my breakfast."

"We will return, dear Madame Cambert, very surely we will return," Aunt Anne assured her, "but we must first visit Concarneau and the sardines."

"Concarneau!" with eyebrows and hands uplifted as though it were Kamschatka. "I hope indeed these ladies may arrive in safety; but it is far, very far, and a journey full of annoyances."

In spite of every ill-omened prophecy being fulfilled unsparingly, the compensations for the drawbacks of that journey were many, above all in the endless interest of new human beings speaking a new tongue, wearing a new garb, and dwelling in a country so unlike other parts of France. Much of it seemed curiously familiar to English eyes. Thickly wooded hills and dales, country lanes and green meadows, divided by real English hedges and ditches, so conspicuously absent elsewhere in France.

Towards the south, in the Morbihan, the country became more like Scotland, with wide stretches of moorland covered with short golden gorse and bright purple heather, a gorgeous carpet, big grey rocks peering up between on the more hilly ground. Even

THE
DRUIDS.

the hedges here were of gorse and heather. Grass fields became rare, evidently the land refused to do more than provide a feast for the eye, leaving it to the sea to satisfy the hungry.

Let no one ask of our route ; as I mentioned before, it was not the crow but the butterfly whose methods we followed.

Rennes and Vannes are names that faintly recur to me, but there is a curious similarity about stations of every kind, and these were neither of them places where we lingered ; though Vannes I know we would never have resisted had we seen by daylight its picturesque beauty and the quaint coifs of the Vannetais women. But so it fell out we found ourselves late one evening at Auray, and were trundled off in a shaky omnibus to the little old inn on the market place.

Next morning we began our day early. Wakened by a glorious sun, and finding we had a spare three or four hours we drove out across the plains of gorse and heather to Carnac. On the outskirts of the little sea-coast village we came upon the famous Druid monuments, the Lines of Carnac as they are called. The road runs straight through the middle of them, for these long rows of great stone pillars cover acres, and formerly extended about two miles square, they say. One could imagine it some vast prehistoric cemetery, the huge stones marking the graves of thousands of slaughtered giants, the result of some great battle in which archangels and demons took part.

When I suggested this very rational idea both Aunt Anne and our *cocher* told me I was entirely on a wrong track. According to Aunt Anne, backed by the

learned archæologists, no bones or signs of a tomb have ever been found here. It is supposed that the monuments were connected with some religious ceremony and formed part of a processional dance. Our driver, however, dismissed this theory with contempt, and affirmed unhesitatingly that these stones were no other than the enemies of St. Cornély and needless to add of *le bon Dieu*, who, coming to the rescue of the good saint, visited these sinners with a judgment in the manner of Lot's wife.

Leaving our carriage to meet us further on, we walked across the plain to Mont St. Michel, a great tumulus of stones and earth on the top of which has been erected a small chapel, where the wives of fishermen from all that country round are wont to go and pray for a safe and prosperous voyage for their men. In a subterranean chamber, bones and flints were found, bones of Druids, perhaps, and of Druids' human sacrifices, but it is St. Michel who rules there now; his chapel dominates the ancient tumulus as his foot once crushed down the dragon.

The view from the mount is grand on a fine day. Away towards the Bay of Quiberon you can see Belle-Ile, where Sarah Bernhardt has built her sea-palace, and the islands of Houat and Hoedic. Eastward lies the great archipelago of the Morbihan, and spread out at our feet the wide plain of Carnac with its Lines of menhirs and dolmens, etc. Here and there the long Lines are broken by rude semi-circles and a space where an altar may have stood. In other places two and three huge blocks of stone support another laid horizontally, forming a gigantic table or shelter, whichever use best suits your own dimensions. On some of these stones were curious attempts at figures and signs,

ST. COR-
NÉLY.

but for the most part there was no carving or decoration of any sort to be seen.

Our *cocher* was by no means content that we did not devote more time and study to these "monuments" of his country. He assured us "one came from America expressly to see them." But Aunt Anne refused to waste more of her morning on these "Lot's wives," as she called them, her interest lying more in humans than in stones, a sentiment she tried to explain to our driver by translating into French, "A live dog is better than a dead lion." He missed her point, but took the remark in his own practical way. "My faith, not a doubt," said he; "and a dead lion he is far preferable to a live lion, above all if that last one he has hunger."

We rattled into Carnac at 10.30, firmly declining to descend at the museum even to see a room full of "dead lions," and chose rather to be taken to the parish church and the house of St. Cornély on the "Place," "Always go straight to the centre of life," being Aunt Anne's precept. Had it been market-day we should have made a bee line for that hive the market.

St. Cornély was one who attained a very great sainthood; he was and still is a prophet in his own country of Carnac. His statue and the pictures of his miracles decorate the fine old granite church. This we gathered from the ancient dame who acted as custodian to the saint's tiny house. Much more she told us concerning Cornély and his wonder-works, showing us a shrined statue of the saint covered with jewels, and various relics; but alas! it was all spoken in the tongue of the ancient Briton, with only here and there a word of French thrown like a flash-light across our darkness. We tried to get at the date of Cornély. Aunt Anne

suggested the sixth century and I the thirteenth—our ancient dame nodded assent to both of us. THE WED-
DING.

One valuable piece of information we did however obtain by means of signs and gesticulations, namely, that a marriage was taking place in the parish church just outside on the "Place."

"Here's a piece of luck," cried Aunt Anne, "a real Breton wedding. Good-bye, saints, I'm off to the sinners." And with a "Bon jour, chère madame," and a silver coin dropped in the ready old palm, she was down the rickety stairs in a twinkling.

The service was just ending in the picturesque old church where for hundreds of years succeeding generations had come to be baptized, married and buried. We joined the gathering crowd outside the porch, and waited for the bridal procession.

Everyone around us was talking in the Breton tongue, a speech quite baffling to one who hopes, with the aid of four or five modern languages, to be able to pick up a stray word or two. There is no clue, and the expressive gestures which go so far towards helping speech with the Latin people, are absent in these reserved, quiet, and somewhat impenetrable descendants of the ancient Britons.

Even Aunt Anne pronounced herself nonplussed until she suddenly espied the cheery face and form of a sailor among the onlookers. With true intuition she made her way towards the travelled seafarer. She found that besides speaking good French he was willing to be most communicative, the natural reticence of his race being modified, no doubt, not only by his genial and gallant profession, but by the prospective rejoicings of this festive occasion. For he was a guest, though arrived too late for the wedding ceremony.

A BRETON
BRIDE.

From him we learnt that the bridegroom was "a solid boy," owning a pretty little farm and many good sheep and cows. The bride held a good position in a fabric of hats, and was of prudent parents. She had a nice little *dot*, though perhaps not one that could have entitled her to expect a marriage so handsome, for it was a marriage "*tres chic*," and a great event in the place.

I enquired if the bride were pretty, an absurdly unpractical aspect of the affair, as I felt on our sailor's ready reply, "My faith, yes! It is a fine girl—big and strong. She will make a superb mother."

A woman standing near, and catching the unwonted sound of French, chimed in at this point with the information that the bride was indeed *bien belle*. "Her apron of brocade, pale blue, her fichu of fine lace, and her dress embroidered with gold and silver thread. Soon should we see how beautiful she was!"

A pretty face evidently did not come into the question at all, the sailor's ideal being health and strength—the woman's fine feathers; both, after all, items which go a long way towards making up that elusive, indefinable abstraction we call beauty.

Presently the crowd bent forward eagerly, and through the already open doors the wedded pair came arm in arm followed by the bridal procession, *demoiselles* and *garçons d'honneur*, relations and friends in due order.

The bride, as our sailor had said, was a fine, strong, healthy-looking woman, with big hips and square shoulders, and a kindly reliable face. Both she and her bridegroom looked of an age to be celebrating their silver, or at least tin, wedding. A nice sensible, comely, middle-aged pair; but the Bretons, they say,

men and women, early lose the bloom of youth: The beauty of the bridal garments had not been overrated. She was very smart in her blue brocade apron, fichu of fine lace, full short skirt of black cashmere bordered with black velvet, her head crowned by the dainty coif with its embroidered wings, and encircled by a wreath of orange blossoms, garlands of orange blossom also decorating her bodice. The bridegroom too wore the real old costume of the country. A short jacket, trimmed with bands of black velvet and rows of little buttons closely sewn together. Full knee-breeches of white accordion-pleated canvas, and brown leather gaiters. This, our sailor told us, is the correct ancient costume, worn since three hundred years at least. The ugly modern trousers patronised by some of the young *garçons d'honneur* being an innovation despised by the true old-fashioned patriotic Breton.

Aunt Anne, still deep in converse with her sailor, brought up the rear of the bridal procession, which marched in triumph down the main street halting at last at the courtyard of a small inn. Here the company passed in, our sailor among them, and all clustered round the bride like bees, kissing, congratulating and apparently chaffing her, if one may judge from the peals of laughter and the bride's rosy cheeks. We stood at the open door of Paradise among the rest who wore not the wedding garment. Presently a group of girls, led by the principal bridesmaid, broke out into an old French song, which, thanks to the *bonne* of my childhood, came back to me with the familiarity of a nursery rhyme, bringing in its train echoes of those other familiar favourites, "*Il était une bergère*," "*Ratapatan*," "*Malbruck s'en va-t-en guerre*," etc. I had forgotten how very nice the words

BRIDES-
MAIDS'
SONG.

were. The fact is that to appreciate the full beauty of the sentiment it is necessary to hear the song sung at a bride, for it was literally discharged full at her, like balls from a cannon's mouth.

"CHANSON DE LA MARIÉE."

I.

Nous somm's venus vous voir
Du fond de not' village
Pour souhaiter ce soir
Un heureux mariage
A monsieur votre époux
Aussi bien comme à vous.

2.

Vous n'irez plus au bal,
Madame la mariée

(Here the ring closed in on their victim and pointed a threatening finger.)

Danser sous le fanal
Dans les jeux d'assemblée;
Vous garderez la maison
Tandis que nous irons.

Aunt Anne's head had nodded approval during this verse. Here she broke out into cheers and applause. "Excellent! I shall sing this song in future wherever I am asked to a wedding! Felicity, my dear, mind you remember those words."

3.

Avez vous écouté
Ce que vous dit le prêtre?
A dit la vérité
Et comme il vous faut être
Fidèle à votre époux
Et l'aimer comme vous.

4.

Quand on dit son époux
On dit souvent son maître
Ils ne sont pas si doux
Comme ils ont promis d'être;

Here the singers turned their attention towards the

bridegroom, who looked mighty uncomfortable, poor fellow.

THE SYM-
BOLIC
BROOM.

Il faut leur conseiller
De mieux se rappeler.

5.

Recevez ce bouquet
Que nous venons vous tendre
Il est fait de genêt
Pour vous faire comprendre
Que tous les vains honneurs
Passent comme les fleurs.

The song is typically Breton in spirit and expression. In no other part of France could be found this delightful, unvarnished directness of speech and thought, this primitive attitude of the sexes towards each other, and the implied high value set on the holy estate of matrimony, since, in spite of all the drawbacks, set forth so unsparingly, it is still considered desirable. And then the tune, how suitable! Elementary as the Druid monuments, plainly hewn out of three or four notes, obvious and monotonous, yet enduring and full of purpose.

Aunt Anne was delighted, and encored with enthusiasm. "It is good, old-fashioned English," she cried; "these Bretons are my own kith and kin—none of your Latin race here—your gallantry and false sentiment. We are right down on the bed rock of Dame Nature."

Gertruda had listened attentively. The words had been pronounced with the same distinctness and delicious little nasal drawl which Yvette Gilbert used so well to render in the folk song. Gertruda's expression signified she was not in sympathy with the sentiments of her gracious lady.

"Your Kaiser would approve of that song," I remarked.

A DRUIDICAL
DANCE.

"*Ach ja*, Fraulein, he would command it to be sung to every bride in his kingdom if there were but a German translation. All the German men would like that song, except perhaps the line which says the wife shall counsel them to remember their vows. That line the Kaiser would surely change. Counsel from the woman does the German man not love." Which remark showed how closely Gertruda has studied her king and countrymen.

More chaff greeted the bride at the close of the song. The bridegroom, too, writhed under a volley directed again at him; but his bride came to the rescue, taking him by the hand with a delightfully motherly, protecting air, and though what she said we could only guess, turned the laugh against the mocking girls.

Meanwhile, after a little temporary refreshment in the form of cider and galettes, both specialities of Brittany, the wedding party formed into line again and, accompanied by two musicians armed with the national instruments, a *binion* and a fife, made their way to a little open place in the street and proceeded to dance, until the wedding breakfast at the inn should be ready.

Dance is a light word to describe the sober, pre-meditated movements of the *ridée* and the gavotte. The *ridée* especially suggests nothing less than the archaic and monumental. A large circle join hands and slowly jog round, with arms swaying rhythmically to a dirge-like measure, which must surely date from the days of the ancient Druids, whose weird monuments we had just seen. Those solemn, upstanding pillars of stone, unhewn, unfinished as many of the honest faces around us, seemed to take on a new significance, and one could fancy how on a moonlight

night, at the magic hour when the ghosts walk, the Druid monuments slowly awaken, and forming into circles jog, sway, and dance to and fro to the monotonous refrain of the *vidée*, just in the fashion of this wedding party.

A SABOT
DANCE.

The gavotte is rather more modern and animated. It is essentially a dance for sabots and heavy ground. The music of the *biniau*—the bagpipes of Brittany—suggest a cheerful, indefatigable jog-trot. Up and down the village street, over the stones through the mud, up hill or down hill, in wind or shine, it is all one to the gavotters. They require no ball-room accessories of parquet floor, satin shoe, or ceiling overhead. The main essentials are those of the good mountaineer—endurance and soundness of wind and limb.

Even at eleven o'clock there was something inspiring and infectious about that insistent reiterated tune kept up so manfully by the *biniau* and fife. Aunt Anne was unable to resist it. The lynx-eye of her chaperon being turned for a moment, off she went hand in hand with her middle-aged mariner, in no way deterred by the scandalised expression on Gertruda's virtuous little face.

"*Ach lieber Himmel!* See then, Fraulein, the gracious lady!" She touched me on the arm, then, the sense of humour overpowering that of propriety, laughed hysterically as her eyes followed the active little figure of her mistress vanishing down the village street hand in hand with the sailor, twisting and twirling in and out of the chain of dancers, footing it with the best of them.

"Give me that kodak," I answered Gertruda, and the sun, which had been playing hide-and-seek with

THE
HAPPY
PAIR.

the clouds, came to my aid and gave me a glorious chance.

Shortly after, the bride pausing near me to take breath, I made so bold as to ask permission to photograph her. In a few words of careful French she gave a gracious consent on condition only that she was not put upon a postcard! I have known ladies who would have reversed the request, but notoriety is not considered *chic* in Finistère. Yet she would have made a charming post-card, this Breton bride in her bravery.

The bridegroom lit up quite eagerly at the notion of being photographed; his only condition, that a picture be sent to him. The pair faced me arm in arm, straight, stiff, and immovable as Druid pillars. The *binion* ceased, and all the wedding guests crowded round to see the operation, and, if possible, squeeze into the picture. Aunt Anne came to my rescue and eliminated all but the centre couple, promising the rest they should be immortalised in their turn when they had paired off, either as past or prospective married couples.

This announcement, made by our friend the sailor, who acted as interpreter, created an immense sensation, specially among the *garçons* and *demoiselles d'honneur*. It was, I have reason to believe, the cause of several engagements being precipitated on the spot, a most irregular proceeding; but Aunt Anne's presence is generally productive of irregular proceedings.

After the bridal pair had been taken from all points of view, the kodak moving round them as though they were monuments, a dear old couple presented themselves, thoroughly eligible, being midway between the silver and golden wedding. Their faces were like

sweet old Ribston pippins, all in browns, yellows, and reds, framed in silver, and coifed, she with her stiff, spotless white cap, he with the round Breton hat trimmed with black velvet and steel buckle. With the assistance of our interpreter, Aunt Anne entered into an animated conversation with them. They told of their own wedding thirty-five years ago in this same distinguished-looking old church, and how they had ridden home in the evening on the same horse, pillion, in the true *mode de Bretagne*. Alas, for the degeneracy of modern days, this good old custom was now nearly obsolete—the bridal pair to-day were actually going to drive away in a carriage!

RIDING
PILLION.

"Which would you prefer, Gertruda?" enquired her gracious lady, speaking to her as usual in German.

Gertruda blushed as though the bridegroom were awaiting her round the corner, but answered firmly:

"A carriage is, perhaps, too magnificent for me, gracious lady, but never would I consent to ride on a horse behind a man. Too much submission to the man does it signify—in Germany, already, we have of that enough."

"Silly child art thou," her mistress pulled her up sharply. "It signifies rather that the wife is going to steady down and regulate the pace both of the man and his beast in future. She will be there—her arm clinging about him, her hand on his heart—wherever he goes."

Aunt Anne has a deep vein of sentiment which does not often appear. After the "*Chanson de la Mariée*," I wondered how the generality of Breton bridegrooms would concur with this view.

Aunt Anne expressed her desire to dance with the old gentleman; but the time for departure having come,

THE
BRIDAL
CAKE.

as our driver signified by vehement cracks of his whip, the chaperon ruthlessly tore her from her gallant old partner, to their mutual regret.

Before driving off, the bride's mother insisted on our taking a look at the wedding breakfast-table and above all at the bridal cake, a masterpiece of confectioner's art set in the central place of honour, and crowned with a miniature reproduction of the bride—a doll dressed in Breton costume, her feet firmly planted on the topmost pinnacle of pink sugar tiers.

"Inside the cake is of orange colour, altogether delicious. If only these ladies could remain and partake it would give us much pleasure," said the bride's courteous mother.

We waved a cordial farewell to the happy couple and drove off, feeling that we had at least contributed a thrilling subject of conversation to the wedding breakfast.

That same night we slept to the sound of the waves breaking along the shore of the little bay of Concarneau.

A BENEDICTION OF THE SEA.

IT is worth even being wakened out of a sweet sound sleep to see the fair bay of Concarneau at two o'clock on a moonlight night in August, the still smooth waters outspread like a vast shimmering prairie with a straight, broad highway of light leading right across the sea from the belt of yellow sand where the ripples break with a fringe of foam, away and away to the gate of the starlit sky.

A MOON-
LIGHT
FLIGHT.

On such a night, surely, if one walked along the coast to the rocky point of Beg Meil jutting out into the sea, one might hear the faint echo of the bells of Is—that city engulfed by the angry waves, and buried fathoms deep off this very coast of Finistère.

Voices from the harbour came through the open window. The fishermen were unwinding their long blue sardine nets, and unfurling the brown sails ready for flight. By twos and threes in a long line out came the flock of little sardine boats, wide wings outspread, with here and there a larger bird of bigger wings for the heavier catch of the "thon."* A goodly fleet, they sailed slowly and noiselessly as clouds across the bay, and vanished soon, merged in sea and sky.

The little chambermaid Pauline told us next morning that the *pêche* had been bad, very bad, this year. Sardines refuse to be caught except in smooth waters,

* White salmon or tunny.

FISHER-
MAN
VERSUS
FARMER.

and the sea had been wicked for the poor fishermen. She knew all about it, for was not her father one of them, and her big brother also? Alas, it was a *triste métier*, Pauline declared, and to be a fisherman's wife a sadder trade still—better far to marry a cultivator!

Pauline had evidently reflected well in coming to this conclusion, for when I asked why she felt more attracted towards the owner of the plough than the boat, she replied promptly:

"With the sea all is uncertain—one season, it is true, you may gain a thousand francs, but then the next perhaps not a hundred sous in the week. When the man does not work he drinks (or, to translate Pauline quite literally, 'that drinks'). With the cultivator the work goes on always, and though he gains but little, for the wife it is better, since he has less chance to drink. God be thanked, the sea is good to-day," she added; "she has done much better since the Benediction three weeks ago."

We inquired anxiously about coming Benedictions, and learnt there was to be one at a distant fishing village the next day—a Pardon and a Benediction which would be attended by all the villagers of that district. There were Pardons or fêtes in plenty coming on everywhere, but most of the Benedictions had already taken place, so we were lucky.

The sardine fleet came home with a good haul that afternoon. The blue nets had had luck. The women and girls seated on the low sea wall knitting, looked out across the bay as the brown specks in the distance came nearer; knitting needles and tongues worked apace. Then, as the boats approached, they trooped down to the pier calling to their special "Marie" or

‘Marguerite’ to know what luck. As the boats slowed down and gently glided into port the brown and red sails drooped and fell like tired wings, and then a wonderful thing happened. Suddenly a cloud of gossamer blue wings fluttered in the breeze in place of the heavy dark sails. The *filets-bleus* had been hung up to dry. And now as each boat came alongside the pier the women eagerly joined in helping unload and haul up the fish, their nimble fingers counting the slippery shining sardines as though they were silver coins, while a crowd of eager buyers, agents, and owners of factories pressed round shouting and bidding prices.

Aunt Anne found an old fisherman, like ourselves, watching the landing of a load of *thon*. A ladder of hands passed the great stiff heavy fish from the boat up to the pier, where they were at once closely packed, standing straight up on end, into a wooden cart, looking like big tin toys, so very stiff and shiny and artificial is the *thon* once on dry land. The old fisherman regarded the tightly packed *charette* with great satisfaction, explained by the fact, we learnt presently, of his being part owner.

“Ah, he is a good fish, the *thon*, he weighs heavy—five to six pounds each one of those fine fellows,” he remarked.

We asked what they were worth. He told us about five francs each on the pier, and, of course, a great deal more further off. “Oh my, yes,” he added in English, and winked as though he had found us out—no deceiving him!

“Ah, you speak English then?” said Aunt Anne.

“Guess dat’s so. I go San Francisco two time,” he explained with pride. But the English had lain rusty

PÊCHEURS
D'ISLANDE

thirty years and refused to carry him any further. He lapsed into French and told us of his travels in many lands, for he had served in the army in '71, then in the navy, and finally followed the calling of fisherman. Once he had been to Iceland with the herring fleet from Paimpol. Did he know Pierre Loti's books? My faith, but yes, he knew the "Pêcheur d'Islande." He gave a true account that one—Iceland was a *dur pays*; you had to take your provisions with you or not much would you find to fill your poor stomach in that land. And thirty days to arrive there! *Dame*, but America was a country far preferable. If one had youth that was the country, but Iceland—*le bon Dieu* smiled not on that coast. He permitted them not even an apple tree for cider! And the sea—ah, but she could be wicked up there!"

He confirmed Corentine's indictment that the sea, most capricious lady, needed a good deal of benediction to keep her in benign mood. What the lordly sun is to the people of the corn, wine, and oil countries, such is the sea to the coast people of Finistère. The wild rugged land gives little save a wealth of colour in gorse and heather, beautiful to look upon, a joy to the artist, scarcely satisfying to the hungry. But the sea holds in her vast bosom stores of food, precious food turned quickly into golden louis—*thon* and sardines in summer, sole, skate, herring, etc., in winter.

Sometimes a beneficent divinity, the sea yields generously of her treasures to her children, rocking them gently, tenderly, as a mother on her breast, smiling serenely, with never the suspicion of a frown or wrinkle on her calm face, through the long summer day and short summer night. But the Breton fisherman knows well that there is little of the maternal

element in his mistress the sea. Any day, any hour, her mood may change, and, like a remorseless, furious goddess, she may rise, wreck his boat, take his life if he prove too daring, and in any case withhold all reward to the toiling nets and lines.

AN EXACT-
ING MIS-
TRESS.

Like all people living in close touch with the great forces of nature, and depending for their very existence on sea, river or land, the Bretons invest their sea with a very human personality. It was no poetic exaggeration which made Loti depict Yann as fearing the vengeance of the sea on his marriage with Gaud.

"One day she will claim me—my life will pay forfeit for this disloyalty to her," was his inmost conviction. Gaud knew it also, even before that dreaded day when he tore himself from her, his newly-wed bride, and trusted himself to the wrathful and neglected sea for the *grande pêche* of Iceland.

"And one night," Loti tells us, "off that sombre coast of Iceland, mid the furious roar of the storm, his nuptials with the sea were celebrated. She who had once been his nurse, who had rocked and reared him from childhood to a strong vigorous youth, claimed him again in his superb virility for herself alone. He remembering Gaud, his wife of earth, resisted with giant's strength this bride of the tomb, these monstrous nuptials," but in vain.

No wonder then that these people of the coast call on Him whom they trust to be mightier than the sea, to lend His aid in softening the heart of their mistress, and implore also the gentle Lady of Succour to bless their hard nights of toil and bring them safe home into port. It is curious to note how many godchildren she has among the boats, this eternal symbol of Motherhood. In the port of Concarneau that afternoon one counted

THE WARY SARDINE. them by the dozen—"Notre Dame de Lorette," "Notre Dame de la Mer," "La Sainte Vierge," "Notre Dame de secours," "de Consolation," "de bonne Espérance," etc., etc. The Virgin's boats far outnumbered those of the loyal Frenchman or the faithful lover, such as "Fleur de Lys" or "Belle Marguerite."

But in spite of all influences which could be brought to bear on the sea, according to our old fisherman, the blue sardine nets had again and again this summer dragged from early dawn through the waters in vain, the colour faded, the nets torn, all for nothing. Again and again the patient Breton fisherwomen re-dyed and mended the long *filets-bleus*, hoping and praying for a better *pêche* on the morrow—the weather continued stormy and the sardine wise.

For the little sardine is a wary fish, requiring most delicate handling. Only when the sea is calm and clear will he venture near the surface, where alone the fine nets can be cast, for lower down the big fish would soon rend them to bits. Even then the net must be rendered invisible to his sharp little eyes and logical little brain, for a sardine is a reasoning being, as any Concarneau fisher will tell you: and no bait, not the choicest morsel of cod, will induce him to go within range of a net he can see, either white or black. Fortunately for the fisherman, it remains as yet an unsolved problem to the sardine mind, only to be attributed to the general contrariness of this puzzling universe, why, wholly without warning and wholly without visible cause, large companies of his friends and relations are apt to suddenly huddle together and be drawn upwards, upwards, till they mysteriously disappear from sight.

The sardine is the chief industry of Concarneau, enabling as it does the women and girls to earn also. There are some thirty *usines* or factories, for preparing and packing sardines in which nearly all those employed are women.

THE
SARDINE-
GIRL.

It is no light work in the *usines*. The hours are long, and perforce mostly night hours, since the sardine must be cooked, decapitated, packed and sealed up in his tin coffin all within a few hours of landing. The pay is poor; for there is no lack of women's fingers, girls' nimble fingers, which all the world over are priced at just the lowest possible figure which hunger forces them to accept.

Still, not to work in a stifling *usine* reeking of hot oil and cooked fish, sometimes till four o'clock, through the long, summer night, is counted so great a misfortune, that the "Blessing of the Sea" is as fervently patronised by the "sardine girl" as by any of her brothers.

* * * * *

We started early next morning for the Benediction, as it was a long drive up and down many hills which our horse and man must take with caution. We were to pass through Pontaven, and there, said our *cocher*, he and his horse would require *déjeuner* and repose; he recommended the same programme to these ladies, and informed us that he patronised Madlle. Joséphine's Hotel, and we could do no better. All the visitors went there—at Gouilet Riec there was no means of eating.

"We do not care in the least about *déjeuner* at Pontaven, but we desire to see the Pardon and the Benediction at Riec," I said, firmly; "for that we must be in good time."

"Ah, these ladies will see all that is necessary if they

OUR
"COCHER."

arrive at three o'clock—Me, I will see to it. The procession, that is the only thing necessary."

"It is no use resisting a will like that," remarked Aunt Anne looking at the thickset shoulders, short neck and bullet head of our driver. "He is going to have his own way and go his own pace."

"Well the *pourboire* is in our hands, and I shall tell him he won't get any unless he does as we wish," I said, for this spirit of philosophy in Aunt Anne savoured too much of abject submission to unwarrantable tyranny to please me. Aunt Anne turned her whimsical glance upon me and remarked indulgently, and I grieve to say with an utter disregard to fact, "Felicity, my dear child, how young you are! That man will get his *pourboire* and he will get his own way."

Pontaven is some nine miles from Concarneau through a pretty wooded country all up and down hill like a switchback. Farms and meadows were scarce as compared with plains of gorse and heather, though wherever the soil would hold a tree the industrious Breton had planted an orchard; for apples do well here, and the soul of the Breton, like that of his Cornish brother, dearly loves cider.

Aunt Anne's practical soul was not content with the empty beauty of the golden gorse and purple heather. She enquired anxiously of our driver whether there was any use to which they were able to put this fair-showing crop.

He replied cheerfully, "Ah yes, but one grows all that to nourish the sheep."

We drove for miles through many acres of gorse, without, however, so much as a glimpse of a sheep, and concluded therefore that our Breton was either not in the agricultural line or had lied to us out.

of a stern sense of patriotic loyalty to his barren land. A LOVER'S
WOOD.

Pontaven nestles down in a nook where several valleys meet and the hills close round protectingly. The river Aven turns its many picturesque mill-wheels and connects it with the sea, a little steamer running down every day to the coast. At the entrance of the little town our driver informed us—

"Here one descends from the carriage and I take my horse to repose himself. By that road one ascends to the Bois d'Amour—these ladies will obtain from there a magnificent view of the town and the surrounding country."

I expressed great doubts as to whether I wanted to climb up that stony road to any Bois d'Amour in creation. But Aunt Anné was so impressed by the decisive tone of our *cocher* that she was already out of the carriage. "Quickest to do as he says, my dear—That man won't budge from Pontaven till we have seen the Bois d'Amour. Come along."

"One would think that stiff-necked old rascal was a reincarnation of Napoleon," I remarked bitterly. "We are giving him two good hours in which to drink cider."

The "Bois d'Amour" is the pride of Pontaven, partly, no doubt, because it is so very young and new—that is, for a wood or forest. The slender beeches are not yet thick enough to hide one pair of lovers from another. But for those still young as the trees, it is emphatically a lovers' wood, with its little, narrow paths, and grassy knolls, and rustic benches, where two can wander arm-in-arm or hand-in-hand on Sunday afternoons and fête days—a very human little wood for human young lovers, but hardly

A MODEL
INN-
KEEPER.

a wood for solitude or communing with Nature. We soon exhausted its possibilities, and descended again into the town.

It is not surprising that Pontaven attracts the artist—specially, perhaps, the amateur artist. At every corner a ready-made picture greets you. The old, narrow streets and waterways, the quaint little bridges and picturesque mill-wheels all seem to be posing self-consciously for *messieurs les peintres*, the woods and hills lending themselves as a background and making things so easy it must be quite demoralising.

In obedience to our dictatorial driver we made our way to the Hôtel Joséphine. Being the principal building, and consisting of two big houses in the central Place of Pontaven, it was not difficult to find. That the proprietress should manage to fill these two large houses during the whole season with no attraction to offer in the way of "baths of the sea," casino or fishing, is in itself significant of her powers, and testifies to the universally admitted fact that Mamzelle Joséphine is a very remarkable woman. Simple peasant as she was and still is, Joséphine has a business capacity which would have made her fortune on the Bourse, added to the special genius of the hostess. She organises daily picnics either into the woods or by river down to the sea, where on the breezy headland of Porte Manec she runs another hotel. In the evenings there is dancing and music. Joséphine's clients are not only well fed, but well amused. As a girl she left her work in the fields to seek her fortune in Pontaven, even as Dick Whittington came up to London, with no capital but a good pair of hands, a clear, capable brain and a generous, courageous spirit, worth in itself a gold mine. She started as a *bonne à*

tout faire, that position so admirably filled by the many-sided French woman, so lamentably parodied by her sister across the Channel. The English servant's watchword of "not my work" truly describes her real limitations. She is a success only as a specialist—as a specialist I must do her the justice to say she is sometimes unequalled, but it is rare indeed to find an Englishwoman who unites the talents of making an omelette, a blouse, and a bed. In France this is regarded only as evidence of ordinary intelligence.

A "BONNE
A TOUT
FAIRE."

Josephine entered the service of a lady who received as pensionnaires *messieurs les artistes*. In those days the artists frequented Pontaven more than now, and many remained there all the year round. She soon became the mainstay of the house, and when, some years later, her mistress died, on the artists refusing to part from their Josephine, she found ready to hand the nucleus from which has sprung her enormous *clientèle*, her big Villa and Annexe sheltering over a hundred well-fed clients. But her success has never tempted Joséphine to relax for a moment her personal supervision and active work in her *ménage*. It is still "Mamzelle Joséphine" who not only reigns in the kitchen, but superintends the waiting at the *table d'hôte*, an all-pervading presence, large, capable, and good-humoured, in a practical blue cotton apron. An army of little Breton waitresses obey her slightest signal, and woe betide the stupid or careless. One of these *aides de camp* had the bad luck to upset a dish of curry. With the strange malice of inanimate objects, it spread not only over table and floor, but included the white dress of a smart American lady and the leg of an unfortunate old gentleman. Like a

A FÊTE OF
THE
PEOPLE.

flash Joséphine was on the scene of the disaster. With the short, prompt orders of a capable Field Marshal, she set all in order for the cleansing of the table, the floor and the old gentleman, and two minutes after it was as if the catastrophe had never been. The American lady had vanished like smoke, to re-appear presently in a new creation of white embroidery, even more exquisite than the first—a distinct gain to her appreciative friends.

Our driver was with difficulty persuaded to leave the hospitable kitchen of Joséphine. He ignored completely our directions as to when we desired to start.

"Ah, you have time enough to see the procession, that is all that can be interesting for strangers at a Pardon," he repeated with the easy good nature produced by having fed well. He had deliberately kept us waiting three-quarters of an hour in spite of repeated and urgent messages. Alas! Aunt Anne had weakly advanced him the money for his and the horse's *déjeuner*. It was like delivering our only weapon to a brigand.

Gouilet-Riec is a tiny scattered village on a creek of the coast. The green hills dip straight into the waters, the overhanging trees cast their shadows as in a lake. We found a large gathering of all the countryside. People were still arriving, but the majority had been there since early morning, the Pardon having begun—as all fêtes and Pardons begin in Brittany—with the Grand'Messe at 8.30, and a grand procession to the little church on the hill, led by priests, fishermen, sailors and white-robed maidens; but this we should see again later, when, after Vespers, they would march down to the sea for the Benediction.

Everyone was arrayed in *costume de fête*. The women in full short skirt bordered with black velvet,

wide-frilled linen collar, and charming white coif like a dainty butterfly with its fine embroidered wings; the men in their short Breton jackets with the rows of little buttons and round felt hats, both trimmed with the broad black velvet so characteristic of the Breton costume. The children, boys and girls, were miniature reproductions of their parents; the effect on small creatures about three foot high was most comical, specially on the girls, who carried off their weighty full-hipped skirts with extraordinary dignity.

FESTAL
COSTUMES.

At the sight of the refreshment booths our driver informed us his horse could march no further, the road down to the ferry became too steep, it would be dangerous. He would await us here. We must cross the ferry and ascend the hill on the opposite side of the creek if we desired to attend the vespers and see the procession start—the Benediction would take place on the shore.

"And you," enquired Aunt Anne, "do you not desire to attend the Benediction?"

"Oh, for me," he laughed grimly, "the sea makes nothing; it is rather a benediction of the hotels, see you, Madame, that would interest me."

"Well, if you want a benediction to rest on you and your family you will not patronise too many of these *débitants de boissons* to-day," rejoined Aunt Anne, and with this parting shaft we marched off down the steep incline to the ferry.

We found the heavy barge-like boat just starting, and apparently full to overflowing, but the ferryman, seeing a prospect of more sous, urged us to enter, saying there was plenty of place. Since there was no fear of sinking, we got in, the ferry being constructed on the lines of safety if not speed. A small boy

LA BRE-
TAGNE
BRETON-
NANTI.

propelled the whole thing by means of an oar worked from one end, while his father collected the sous from the passengers. On the opposite bank a great crowd had assembled from all the district round, many bringing their provisions with them for the day, though this did not prevent the little *cabarets* of the straggling village doing a brisk trade.

Men and women everywhere formed into separate groups, neither young nor old showing any desire to consort with each other: they might have been members of conventual establishments, except for the miniatures trotting at their mothers' sides, and for an occasional painful acknowledgment of relationship later on in the day, when some round hat remaining overlong within the alluring precincts of the village public-house, a white coif sternly went to the door and summoned the culprit to come forth. Curiously British all this, and very un-French, as much so as their speech, the names of their towns and villages (more often than not Welsh or Cornish), their physiognomy, and their whole attitude of serious reserve and fervent, sometimes bigoted, religious faith. For nearly two thousand years this race have kept distinct, in spite of being the most loyal of French subjects, and though French is now enforced in the schools and churches of the towns, here one was in the heart of Brittany, the real "Bretagne Bretonnante," where scarcely a word of the alien tongue was spoken or understood.

Save ourselves, there were no outsiders except three American ladies, who whizzed over in a red motor car from Pontaven, the lady of the curried dress being one of them, and addressed by her two companions, a pink and a mauve beauty, as "Auntie."

Emerging from their chrysalis dust-cloaks, they shook out their gay toilettes, and, each armed with a kodak, plunged into the crowd, their smart little Parisian hats mingling with the white coifs, giving them the air of birds of paradise in a poultry farm.

OUTSIDE
THE
CHURCH.

We followed a stream of the more devout among the assembly making their way up to the winding road to the church. The service of the Rosary was going on. The little church was filled to overflowing, all kneeling on the bare stones, the seats having been removed to make more room, the congregation stretching far into the churchyard.

Aunt Anne and I scrambled up a high bank of blackberry bushes and thorns, and sat down among a group of white coifs waiting to see the procession start.

Aunt Anne's agility called forth the admiration of a cheery old lady who offered her a hand.

"Madame has courage! Me I was forced to walk half a kilometre round by the field to arrive up here," she laughed.

"Ha, you speak French, Madame! What good fortune," cried Aunt Anne, and joyfully fell to with her new friend, who turned out genial and communicative, not common traits in Brittany where a dignified and rather suspicious attitude of reserve is the usual thing. They at once compared ages and grandchildren. Aunt Anne had the advantage by three years in age, but in grandchildren the Breton dame exceeded her by fifteen.

"I trust to arrive there in time," said Aunt Anne, hopefully.

"Easy for Madame to say when she is not the one to bear them," answered the white coif dryly.

She herself was not of the coast, but several of her

WOMEN
MUST
PRAY.

relations being *pêcheurs*, she never failed to attend a yearly Benediction of the sea. It was necessary for *le bon Dieu* to bless much the sea, or she gave trouble and caused miseries all round, did the sea—wrecks, storms, no fish, no work! It was a *triste métier* that of a fisher! This seemed a universal verdict on the part of the women.

We noticed that among the crowd of kneelers there were few men. The congregation consisted almost entirely of closely packed white caps.

"Ah, it is the women who pray see you," sighed our neighbour. "The men *ça boit, ça boit tout le temps.*"

"For men must drink and women must pray," seemed to be the rule of life among these fishers of Finistère. Not that this would indicate lack of belief in the efficacy of prayer on the part of the men, but merely a dividing of duties both of which are necessary, and man takes first choice. He rarely neglects *Grand'messe* on Sundays, however, and never puts out to sea on that day, however good the promise of fish. Surely a very practical test of belief in his religion! And the Breton woman it appears does not sit down meekly and content herself with prayers as regards her lord and master. Her remonstrance not only takes the active form of dragging him, often by main force, from the too alluring haunts of cider and *eau de vie*, but her sabots if necessary are brought to play upon his muddled head. The young girls early learn this second use for their stout wooden shoes, and, as our friend assured us, "a strong girl who is sober, and sees straight, can effect much with her father who is drunk and sees crooked."

The road from the church down to the little creek was lined with people awaiting the procession, many,

like ourselves, perched in the trees and hedges and on the high grassy banks. Brittany is one of the few parts of France in which one sees real English hedges and ditches. It signifies, no doubt, that the land is not, as elsewhere, too valuable to permit of these delightful borders to roads and fields.

THE PRO-
CESSION.

The Rosary and Vespers over, a brass trumpet and big drum announced that the procession would now be formed and march down in solemn state to the sea.

First came the priests, *curés* from neighbouring parishes, carrying their messe and chaunt books, a gorgeous banner waving over their heads, all white and gold and silver, with a picture of Our Lady seated in the clouds above a ship at sea. After the priests followed a long line of sailors and fishermen bearing on their shoulders models of ships, and statues of the Virgin, St. Joseph, St. Anne, and various saints reputed to make it their special business to protect the fishermen and their boats. After these came a flock of white-robed maidens decked with blue ribbons, "the colour of Mary," and bearing aloft more gaily coloured banners. The people formed in a long line bringing up the rear, and down the winding road all went to the white fringe of the sea.

Passing a group of small low houses, our friend pointed to one as the home of her brother. The door stood open, and we saw the three Americans inside eagerly talking and gesticulating.

"Those ladies desire greatly to buy some of the old beds of Brittany. My brother, see you, possesses one very fine, but those ladies will not give the price, I think."

At her request we looked in. There was no sign of any bed that we could see, but what appeared to be a

A BRETON
BED.

very fine old carved cupboard, with a double row of sliding doors, was being critically examined by the three birds of paradise.

"What a fine 'armoire,' but where is the bed?" asked Aunt Anne. Our friend pulled aside one of the sliding doors and showed four deep shelves fitted up like the berths on a ship. "There is place in each bed for two, if the family is large you see, my ladies, and in Brittany all the families are large. It is for that reason one is forced to sell the fine old carved fronts and place here instead a curtain."

"My, ain't these doors cunning! And see this little niche at the top with the Virgin's statue," cried the mauve bird. "Say, Auntie, I'm going to buy this bed for a buffet, right away, if you don't."

"I'm going to bargain, so you hold on. Guess one mustn't give what they ask," said Auntie.

But the bargaining was being carried on under difficulties, for the owner, a stolid-looking Bretonne, stuck manfully to her price, and shook her head to all other propositions, her knowledge of French being limited to figures told out on her fingers. She said something in Breton to her sister-in-law, who laughed, and turned to the ladies.

"The merchant of antiquities at Quimper will give one hundred and thirty francs, my ladies. My sister-in-law she requires one hundred and fifty."

"*Beaucoup trop*," said the lady. "Tell her I have got to pay the freight over to Noo York. That will cost a gold mine."

We left the fair Americans still hard at it, and as far as I know they remained there during all the time of the Benediction, we saw no sign of them. Besides buying their bed, they were acquiring the valuable

lesson that a Breton rarely budes from the price he or she names. Bargaining, as carried on so cheerily throughout other parts of France, is sternly in disuse in Brittany.

THE
SEA IS
BLESSED.

"Those ladies will not obtain the bed unless they give the price," remarked our friend with conviction as we walked down the hill.

"Splendid! I admire that," said Aunt Anne, who is one of the keenest bargainers I know when she is in the vein for it. But she takes it as a game, and whatever she is doing, does with her might. In this case, too, her sympathy was with the owner of the ancient bed. "It seems cruel to tear those fine old beds from their proper setting, and turn them into buffets for American millionaires," she declared with a touch of bitterness. "I would hate to take away the one beautiful thing from that bare little home; and those American women too, who I'll wager have got so much already they don't know what to do with it."

"Aunt Anne," said the chaperon, "you know you are just longing to go back and outbid them, but I am going to see this Benediction and so are you."

The little creek was gay with fishing boats also come to be blest, while a crowd watched the ceremony from the opposite shore.

The priests stood in line on the bank, behind them the sailors and fishers of the procession, together with those of the trumpets, pipes and drums. Then facing seaward they chaunted the short service of the Benediction, the people crossing themselves and responding in the familiar phrases, "Ora pro nobis," "Ave Maria grazia plena," etc.

So the sea was blessed by the Church and the people, and she smiled sweetly and glistened with

HOME-
WARDS.

pleasure in the bright afternoon sunshine, looking as harmless and innocent as one of the white-robed blue-ribboned maidens, as little capable of rising in her wrath to slay and destroy as the fair-haired girl who, perhaps, to-night will seize her big wood sabots and fling them at the heads of her drunken father and the man he is fighting outside the *cabaret*.

The trumpets and horns sent out strident clanging notes and the voices of men and women joined in a quaint dirge-like Druidical chaunt as the procession wound slowly up the hillside again.

The shadows lengthened and a fresh little breeze from over the sea stirred the wings of the white butterfly coifs as they and the round black hats dispersed to their various homes along the coast and over the hills and vales of Finistère.

* * * * *

Our *cocher* greeted us with alacrity.

"It pleased these ladies, the beautiful procession?" he enquired pleasantly, but his walk was distinctly unsteady.

Aunt Anne raised her lorgnettes and regarded him fixedly.

"I fear you have disregarded my advice," she answered, sternly.

He muttered something about waiting many hours and requiring a good *pourboire*.

The red motor of the Americans overtook us on the road back to Pontaven. They waved to us and "Auntie" shouted triumphantly, "We've gotten the bed!"

Aunt Anne shouted back, "We've seen the Benediction."

A SARDINE GIRL.

IT was at the *Fête des Filets-bleus* we first met Corentine. Concarneau kept high holiday, and all the townspeople, headed by the local magnate *monsieur le Comte* and the popular *monsieur le maire*, combined to make this fête a success for the benefit of the "Blue Nets," namely the sardine fishers, who had had a bad season. There was a concert and a theatrical performance in which local talent was assisted by a real live member of the Comédie Française, and a "Concours de Costumes Bretons" ancient and modern, a "Concours de danses," and one of song, for all of which prizes were offered. The artists, of whom there are always a numerous contingent at Concarneau, also contributed a very *chic* little collection of sketches, to be sold for the same worthy object.

THE
FISHER'S
FÊTE.

A temporary theatre and an open air-platform were erected in the market place, and it was here in the densely packed crowd watching the Concours de Costumes that Aunt Anne and I found ourselves next to Corentine and her two friends. The three girls in their dainty white caps and wide-frilled collars stood just in front of us laughing and chattering away in their native Breton, a language full of h's and queer illusive sounds. Occasionally they broke out into French, and we gathered they were on intimate terms with many of the distinguished competitors mounted on the red baize platform—the girls in front, the men

MONSIEUR
LE MAIRE.

behind, representing every variety of ancient costume of Brittany.

The judges were performing their perplexing office under superhuman difficulties, for instead of being on the platform where they could get a fair view of the candidates and of each other, they were down among the audience struggling in the midst of a seething crowd which threatened to submerge some of the shorter ones, and altogether unable to pronounce a unanimous verdict, or even hear each other speak, till, happily for all parties, *monsieur le maire* came to the rescue. Thanks to his imposing bulk, height, depth and breadth, he made his way to the front, dividing the crowd like a big *thon* among the sardines. In festal white waistcoat and glorious green tie, his ruddy animated visage towered majestically above the crowd, and with the free use of his gold-knobbed walking stick he at last succeeded in drawing his fellow judges near enough within his charmed radius to take the votes.

The first thing was to choose a Queen. A royal chariot awaited her, decorated with garlands of flowers, a panoply overhead, and drawn by a dignified and venerable white steed evidently accustomed to take part in these functions, and incapable of surprise, however eccentric the behaviour of the human beings around him.

The essential qualifications for a Queen was that her costume should be the most ancient and the most faultlessly correct of all present. Beauty was not an essential either in the lady or her dress, any more than piety, wit or wealth. The same test was applied in the awarding of all the prizes. The idea at the back of this was no doubt to foster a spirit of patriotism, to preserve, in these degenerate days of levelling

uniformity and centralisation, something at least of the individuality of Brittany, in her costumes, dances and songs.

QUEEN OF
THE BLUE-
NETS.

One by one the costumed maidens were bidden advance a little, and turn round as on a pivot; for the back view was just as important as the front, show their shoes, and even a discreet amount of stocking. The variety of costumes was curious, ranging from gorgeous embroideries in gold and silver thread, covering skirts, bodices and aprons which suggested the wealth of the frugal farmer and proprietor, to the severest simplicity of fisher wives' plain petticoat and shawl, devoid of decoration and ornament as the rocks of the seacoast of Finistère. Some of these ancient costumes were not specially becoming to the wearer, but all were picturesque and strongly characteristic. "Rosporden" wore a corsage of violet, red and greens with a very smart apron of another colour, and a skirt which formed a regular shelf of pleats around her waist. She was awarded a prize for absolute correctness. The costume of the finally selected Queen of the fête, a nice, modest-looking little round-faced damsel, consisted in a plain drab skirt, grey crossover shawl and wooden sabots. Since the days of Cophetua's beggar-maid never did Queen in less regal habit mount a throne. For headdress she wore a covering like a nun's veil woven of fine wool, falling over her shoulders, sadly inconvenient whatever her occupation, unless, as it suggested, when saying her prayers. There was no dainty white collar or coif, no ornaments, except the one characteristic touch of a pair of gold ear-rings showing the heirloom which often descends to the wearer from a long line of grandmothers, yet I must own a subtle charm pervaded

ARTISTS'
MODELS.

this little figure which made one think of a Whistler nocturne.

Great was the excitement and astonishment of our three little neighbours at the election of this Queen.

"And thou didst swear it would be Queen Fournier."

"And thou Mathilde Berr, *hein*? Well we are all deceived finely. Think of it, a queen who lacks even a gold chain round the neck."

"It is certainly because of *messieurs les artistes*, two of them are judging and they like always what is out of the ordinary," said the third girl, "and Françoise has been painted by them see you. For *messieurs les artistes* it makes nothing to them if you are ugly, they desire not what is pretty but what is bizarre."

As they were talking now in French for the benefit of their neighbours, Aunt Anne at this point joined in the conversation. We soon learnt that Corentine, the last speaker, knew all about the artists and their ideas, for in spite of a decidedly pretty little face she also sometimes posed for these eccentric individuals.

"But only in costume! Augustine, thou should'st always add that," corrected Corentine demurely. "Never would my parents consent to my posing otherwise."

"*Messieurs les artistes* they are very droll," said Augustine. "There was one he painted me without a face—the back of the head only—he declared it was a marvellous likeness, yet not my mother even could know it was me." Augustine was distinctly plain, a rough hewn honest face which would look just as well taken from the back of her head.

"Ah, that one he was American, very droll he was very droll. Madame his wife also she was droll. She

desired to buy my collar," said Corentine. "She offered me the price of two new collars if I would take it off and leave it there with her." AN
HEIRESS.

"Little fool wert thou to refuse," chimed in both her friends.

"So said my mother—she angered herself when I told her. It was a foolish idea no doubt," said Corentine, half wistfully, "but I felt as if it were like selling a piece of myself. Ah see," she cried, suddenly, "there is Mademoiselle Marguerite who is chosen as Maid of Honour and gets the second prize."

And all three girls set up a loud cheering in which many others joined.

Mademoiselle Marguerite's dress was as decorative as that of Françoise was plain. The full black skirt had a deep border of gold-thread embroidery which also nearly covered the short bodice and wide sleeves. The white chemisette and cap were of finest work and the collar and apron of lace—long gold earrings and a gold Breton necklace set on black velvet completed the effect of butterfly and moth as the Queen and her Maid of Honour took their seats in the chariot of flowers.

"Mademoiselle Marguerite is the niece of our master, he who owns the *usine* where we work," said Corentine. "Her father is farmer and proprietor, she is rich, and has a pretty little *dot*. That costume alone one says is worth two thousand francs. See her gold earrings and chain and the buckles on her shoes. From her ancestors she inherits them!"

When the girl competitors were disposed of, the men came forward, and then the real fun began. Each one in turn had a volley of chaff directed on him from the audience, our three friends taking prominent part.

CHEVA-
LIERS
D'HON-
NEUR.

There were men in white flannel coats bordered with black velvet from Gueméni, and men of Carhaix with hats bound in red and blue chenille, but most of those who obtained prizes wore the full white canvas knee breeches like those of the bridegroom whose wedding we had attended. One young man, who remonstrated loudly at being rejected, was informed by *monsieur le maire* that the smart striped trousers, of which he was evidently so proud, were the cause of his undoing. "And thou a Breton to wear such things! Have shame of thyself!" cried the mayor. The owner of the offensive garments appealed to the ladies of the audience, being something of a wag, whereupon *monsieur le maire* bade him descend and claim his prize among the pretty girls; advice which he promptly took, leaping headlong from the platform mid shrieks of applause.

Chevaliers d'honneur were chosen to accompany on foot the Queen and her four Maids of Honour, and the royal chariot then proceeded on a triumphal procession round the market place and through the town. Then suddenly up went a forest of umbrellas, for this being a peculiarly unpropitious moment for rain, down it came in a steady vindictive downpour, making a large lake just on the spot reserved for the dancers. This is a regular habit of the clouds in Brittany, the climate showing another of the many strong resemblances between England and this corner of France.

"Ah the accursed rain," remarked Corentine heartily, "now one will be obliged to dance in the market hall, and there will be such a crowd no one will see."

"Ah bah! what is two centimetres of water," said Augustine. "Me, I danced the gavotte in

four centimetres of mud last week at the Pardon of Trégune and gained the third prize too." NIGHT
WORK.

"Thou hadst luck in thy partner," remarked Françoise slyly. "A sailor who can dance like a cork on a wave, *mon Dieu*, so thin and light he was; while, my partner, he resembled a hedgehog."

"Seems to me you girls have nothing to do but dance and sing and go to Pardons," said Aunt Anne, a remark which produced what she wanted, a graphic account of how their lives were really spent. All three spoke together, but as they were saying the same thing it did not much matter. It appeared that they all worked in the *usines* where the sardine and *thon* are prepared. This meant very frequently sitting up nearly all night.

"Presently, at the 'Concours de chants modernes,' these ladies will hear the song of the "Filets-bleus," also the song of the "Fille du pêcheur." "We three are in the chorus," announced Corentine, proudly; "Madame must remark well the words—they are the verity pure—those songs were composed expressly for we other sardine girls, for in the *usine* at nights we must sing or impossible to keep oneself awake, and with the old songs one becomes so familiar one sings them even while sleeping. For example, 'Il était trois mat'lots de Groix—'Tra la déira la la la, Tra la déira la faire.' It is a veritable lullaby! Same thing with 'Il était une barque à trente matelots'—Our grandmothers sang those songs as young girls. Madame may judge if one becomes tired when often one finishes not till three, four o'clock even, in the morning."

"My poor children! But then you must sleep in the day," cried Aunt Anne.

BRETON
FAMILIES.

They laughed. "Ah the fine idea Madame has there! How would thy mother regard thee, Françoise hein, if thou didst propose to sleep in the morning."

"Why here is Augustine with six children in the house, and by me we have five," said Corentine. "The poor Françoise she is placed still worse, for she has seven of them and more who are arriving."

"Probably twins, says my mother," Françoise added resignedly. "Where they will sleep *le bon Dieu* alone knows."

"Well, the population does not seem to be failing here," remarked Aunt Anne.

"My faith! But the children they grow like the gorse here in Brittany," answered the experienced Françoise. "In our street we have one family which numbers twenty-two. It is, I fear, in the air."

"Oh, large families are an excellent thing," said Aunt Anne encouragingly. But I think twenty-two, unless in the attenuated form of grandchildren, would have staggered even her.

"Then, beside the children," went on Corentine, "we have the washing down there by the river, three, four days a week, and the nets to dye and to mend, and a mass of things to do which arrive daily—not much time for sleep," she laughed gaily. "And for the Pardons they fall so often on a Sunday, which in all the cases is fête, that one gains not much, see you."

Augustine, it appeared, had also another trade, that of *couturière*, her own and Corentine's skirt being examples of her handiwork. The thickly pleated skirt of Brittany is as marvellous a work as the wide gauffred collar. The pleats stand out like a shelf all round the waist, held out by a roll of stuff inside. The girls explained this to us, much to Aunt Anne's

relief, for she had thought their funny squat little figures quite abnormal, specially the girl from Rospenden whose shelf was extra wide. BUYING
SWEETS.

As the rain still pelted down steadily, we moved under the trees and made our way to a stall laid out with piles of cakes and rainbow-coloured sweets, where we proceeded to select a supply for some of those children at home. Our friends determinedly chose the most poisonous-looking. I began by trying to guide their choice, but gave it up, reflecting that if the worst did come to the worst, apparently two or three members could well be spared out of each family. It would certainly facilitate the sleeping arrangements in the home of Françoise.

The purchase of sweets is a slow operation in Concarneau. You may order them by the pound or the kilo as we did, but let no one imagine that will make the slightest difference to the gentleman selling you these dainties. His method is to count with his fingers each separate bon-bon and give you eight to the sou, and this he patiently proceeds to do in spite of any objections you may offer. Fortunately time was no object, and it was a system which commended itself to our sardine girls.

"Yes, that is the right fashion," they assured us. "So it is done always here in Concarneau. One is sure in this manner to receive the right quantity. With weighing there are so many tricks see you."

"But with the good Sisters we learnt well all the weights and measures—it is not that we cannot reckon," explained Augustine eagerly.

"My faith, yes. With the good Sisters one learnt all things. It was an education altogether admirable," chimed in Corentine. "We three we all attended the

THE GOOD
SISTERS.

convent school as children. It was there we learnt to speak the French so well."

On Aunt Anne asking if they had been happy at the convent and whether the "good Sisters" were kind, the three girls burst into a chorus of unfeigned praise of their nuns.

"Ah, but all the world wept when the government sent the soldiers to chase them," said little Françoise.

"*Dame!* We did more than to weep, we other sardine girls," laughed Corentine, and her two friends assented with wide grins, evidently recalling a pleasant memory.

"What did you, my children?" asked Aunt Anne.

"It was all written in the newspapers," answered Augustine proudly. "These ladies, without doubt, read the account in Paris, it is now about two years ago."

We feared we had missed those newspapers, and begged for another chance of hearing.

"My faith! We beat the soldiers—six times we drove them back," Augustine's eyes flashed like those of an old soldier recalling Austerlitz.

Then Corentine took up the tale and recounted how the women and girls of Concarneau, hearing that a regiment was to arrive from Quimper on a certain day at early dawn, an hour when the men would be at sea, to turn the nuns out of their convent, resolved to make a desperate resistance, and show all the world what they felt about it. They assembled *en masse* and lined every street leading from the station on the hill, down to the convent. Whichever way the soldiers turned the road was blocked by women and girls closely packed as sardines in the tins.

"It surprised those soldiers very much for they thought to arrive while all the world still slept," said

Corentine. "On seeing the men, with one voice we cried shame on them, and cursed them with a good heart."

LOYAL
CHAM-
PIONS.

But she allowed the soldiers were, after all, not to blame, they disliked the job as much as did their officers.

"But they lacked moral courage, like all men, the miserable ones! They feared to disobey—*Dame!* Not a woman in Concarneau but would have gone to prison sooner than assist to chase the good Sisters. *Monsieur le capitaine* he commanded his lieutenant to ride through the women if they refused to circulate, the soldiers following after in line. Think you we moved for that? Quite to the contrary! Down on the knees we put ourselves there in the street, and prayed with a loud voice that *le bon Dieu* would send a judgment upon the enemies of the good Sisters. The soldiers they liked not this praying. It annoyed them also to be cursed, for many among them were the sons, the brothers, and the *fiancés* of the women and girls. But they were forced to advance as the officers commanded. Then the horse he refused to march on the kneeling women, and he jumped and gave such good kicks that *monsieur le lieutenant* he fell to the earth. Then the women laughed and took away his hat and the officer he enraged himself and swore with fury to the men that he would have them shot if they did not force a way through. Ah, then we rose up, we sardine girls who were holding ourselves ready for this moment, and we fought those soldiers, we beat them with our umbrellas, with our sabots, with our good fists, with all we possessed. We scratched them the face, we tore them the uniform, six times we chased them from that street. Many commenced by saving

A BRAVE
DEFENCE.

themselves and trying to pass by the roads at the side, but in every street they encountered the women. Finally, by the main road, they finished by forcing a way, but much pain they had and much time it took them to come through."

"*Mon Dieu*, but we gave them something as *souvenir*, *hein*," added Augustine, with a ruminating glance at her muscular arms which enabled one to vividly picture the scene.

"Oh, my girls, how I wish I had been there to help you," cried Aunt Anne. "But I suppose they chased the poor Sisters in spite of you?"

"*Hélas, oui*, Madame; they broke open the convent door, the wicked devils—but happily those there received on the head some good buckets of black mud from the harbour, so thick it was that mud, so foul the odour, God be thanked for it, scarcely they thought to accomplish their bad work. The reverend Mother she made her excuses to the officer for this treatment, which was not by her order, but others were in the convent, see you, assisting at the barricading. With great dignity at last came forth the good Sisters, marching even as a funeral *cortège*, the reverend Mother at the head, arm in arm with *monsieur le maire*, who bore in his hand the flag of France. He had the tears in the eyes as he supported the good Mother, and all the people of Concarneau they cheered *monsieur le maire*, and loved him as their father from that moment. The wicked government they deposed him from being mayor because of his loyalty to the good Sisters, but with one voice the people they elected him again, so we have him always see you in spite of the government in Paris."

"How? He of the beautiful white waistcoat

and green tie?" enquired Aunt Anne with breathless interest.

SONG OF
THE BLUE-
NETS.

"And a face of lively red—yes, that is the same," assented Corentine: "a beautiful man, full of heart. Does Madame perhaps know him?"

"Alas, no," replied Aunt Anne, "not yet, but I intend to know him," she added under her breath.

And now the rain having ceased, our three friends bade us *au revoir* and hurried off to assist in the chorus of the "Filets-bleus," not, however, before we had arranged to meet again at the Pardon of Lanriec in a few days' time, if not before. There we should see real country dancing, besides races with horses, games and many other diversions.

From the group of girls on the platform our three friends sent us a wide-stretched grin of recognition. Aunt Anne and I felt ourselves shining with reflected glory when the chorus was rapturously encored, and on the audience being invited to take part we lifted up our voices and sang as if we were sardine fisherwives. Aunt Anne could not catch the tune, a flimsy thing if the truth be told, and we neither of us knew any words save *filets-bleus*, but we put the right spirit into it, and those two little words seemed to touch a chord of as deep a significance here on this coast of Finistère as does "Home, sweet home," in England.

In accordance with Corentine's prophecy the rain, though now over, had spoilt all chance of dancing out of doors, so the "Concours de danses" was removed to the covered market, and everyone swept over there in a body directly the singing finished.

I got divided from Aunt Anne by the crowd, but caught sight of her mushroom hat mounting the market steps among the advance guard and felt sure

AUNT
ANNE AND
MONSIEUR
LE MAIRE.

she would miss nothing worth seeing. For myself I dislike crowds in a confined space, and specially crowds with dripping umbrellas, so I decided to leave my charge unchaperoned for once.

Gertruda and a friend she had found in the hotel passed me shortly after.

"It was impossible to enter, the crowd was so great; and all were pushing one over the other at the door," reported Gertruda.

"Your gracious lady is in the middle of that," I told her.

"*Lieber Himmel!*" cried the shocked Gertruda, "assuredly the gracious lady will be crushed to death, a such terrible squash of people never have I seen. I will go and stand near the door in case she is brought out fainting," said the faithful girl.

I left her to do so, but a knowledge of Aunt Anne's character convinced me she would not be among the fainting.

And I was right! How she managed it she never quite explained, but this interesting fact Aunt Anne did admit, that, arm-in-arm with *monsieur le maire* she had made her way to a place of honour in that market hall, the crowd giving way before her and her magnificent escort as though they were royalty.

"Oh, my dear, I had such an interesting time! A delightful man that mayor!" Her eyes twinkled mischievously. "The dances were charming, so quaint and wooden; and I helped to decide the prizes—those poor dear men badly needed a woman to assist them."

"But how on earth did you get to know the mayor?" I asked in bewilderment.

"Oh it does not take long to know people when you are really sympathetic," she answered evasively;

"we had a deeply interesting talk about the expulsion of the nuns. It appears the Sisters are all still in Concarneau, received into the homes of the townspeople, whose children they teach and take care of. I sent a little present to the dear old Mother. The mayor confirmed entirely our girls' story. I told him I considered his conduct magnificent. He replied he was enchanted to have met a lady of such superior intelligence."

A DULL
MARKET.

"It is not one chaperon that you need, Aunt Anne. It is a bodyguard," I replied, dryly.

* * * * *

In the market next morning I was buying fruit, when I heard a little voice at my elbow, and, turning, saw our friend Corentine. She wore a dark-red knitted shawl and no collar, "because of the accursed rain," she explained, which takes out all the fine gauffres and reduces it to the state of pulp. I no longer wondered that the wearers of those collars regard the rain with enmity, when the mysteries of the art of gauffring were revealed to me. Each fold is separately treated with a fine long straw—truly a Herculean labour of patience, for they are as numerous as the rays of the sun.

This market was a dull affair compared to those of Dieppe and Trouville. No one bargained, no one joked and chaffed, no one clamoured for your custom. The flowers and fruit made a poor show also as compared with the Normandy markets. Grapes, peaches, roses, there were none. Aunt Anne, finding it dull work, had gone home, leaving me to buy the fruit which was to us a necessity of life. Corentine made her purchases of salt butter and potatoes without a superfluous word, paid down the sum named, and took off her goods.

"The first price that is also the last price," said one

BRETON
VIRTUES.

old body with dignity, when Aunt Anne, in all innocence of Brittany customs, had enquired the last price of a basket of greengages. It certainly resulted in a very dull market, did this high standard.

"We Bretons we say a thing and we move not from it," said Corentine; "*le bon Dieu* made us like that, see you. If my mother says she will not speak to my father for three days, then she speaks not even if the house is burning. If my father swears to break the nose of a man who has angered him, he breaks it even if he must wait for the good moment seven years. So in the market one says three sous for two apples, and never will one move from that price." I said I hoped they were equally steadfast in love and loyalty these Bretons, but Corentine shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, for love—that is another affair. It is rare to find a man who is constant—the men, they make the court to all the pretty girls—they resemble the bees among the gorse blooms." I remarked that she seemed to have had some experience. "Oh, me, I know men," replied Corentine. "I am eighteen years old, but I shall not marry at that age, as did my poor mother. Oh, no! I shall wait till I am old—twenty-five perhaps. I will first see life." She then confided to me that the wish of her life was to go as *bonne* to Paris or London. Would not I take her? Gladly she would serve me for nothing. Poor little sardine girl! I dared not be encouraging. I suggested her mother could ill spare her, but she assured me, on the contrary, her room was more needed than her company when winter came and she had no means of earning. Finally we settled to discuss the matter further when we met at Lanriec.

* * * * *

Lanriec is a *petit pays* about three kilometres from Concarneau. Just before reaching the village we came to cross roads, where crowds of country people were grouped in hedges and trees. A policeman advanced and requested us to draw up till the race was over, the high road having been adopted as the course for the time. A trotting race was on, and presently the first and second men came clattering along close at each other's heels.

THE
TROTTING
RACE.

"You may now advance," said the policeman to our driver. "It is improbable that the third horse will overtake you—he is far behind."

But he did, and we found ourselves joining in the race and going neck to neck with number three, roused to desperate energy at the prospect of being defeated by our *fiacre*. We came in fourth out of seven—not bad, considering our lack of training. We were loudly cheered, and bowed graciously to right and left of us.

In the village street the crowd was so great we doubted ever finding our sardine girls. But, perched on a hedge, they had watched with the pride of ownership our triumphal entry as "Number four," and now descended to claim us. They took us first to the church, very ancient and picturesque, a favourite subject for the picture postcard. Our three friends said their prayers at a small side altar much patronised by girls. Many women came in just for a few minutes, knelt in silence, and then joined the gay crowd outside.

Country people and fisher people were about equally represented, and there were tugs of war and games of all sorts, in which the competition between the two was keen.

CAPABLE
SARDINE
GIRLS.

Every half-hour down came the rain and up went the women's umbrellas to protect cap and collar. The rain was the signal for the men to disappear with one accord for an interval of refreshment within the many little *cabarets* or drink shops. The women rarely followed. They contented themselves with the more harmless and inexpensive fare provided by the stalls in the street.

The *binion* and pipes were in full force. They played through the sack races, the tug of war, the gavotte and even through the rain. I think it was all the same tune, but the *binion* is an instrument which always appears to be playing the same tune, with slight variations in the time.

During the first pause in the proceedings, Corentine renewed her petition that I would engage her as *bonne*, or, in fact, in any capacity from stable boy to cook. Meanwhile, Augustine and Françoise with equal fervour pressed their services upon Aunt Anne. Presently, to my dismay, I heard her seriously arranging for this addition to her household.

"Very well, Françoise then shall do the washing and feed the chickens and help the butler to serve at table."

"Also I can make the beds and fry the fish and knit the stockings for Madame," added Françoise eagerly.

"But no, thou shalt not knit the stockings—Madame she promised me that should I do, and also make her the dresses, is it not so, Madame?" interposed Augustine indignantly. "Thy work it is the washing."

"Silence!" said Aunt Anne. "You render me deaf, my girls. I permit no quarrelling. You shall knit,

both of you. I need many stockings. Stockings for all the house and for all the children of my village."

"Madame engages me for next week, yes?" cried Augustine. "Or we can start even sooner if Madame desires it—and Corentine also."

AUNT
ANNE'S
NEW
HOUSE-
HOLD.

Tears were in poor Corentine's eyes. "Is it then true that Madame engages you others? Oh, dear Mademoiselle, take me also," she implored me.

"Aunt Anne, what have you done?" I asked aghast. "Have you really engaged these two girls?"

"Yes," she answered complacently, "I have. I am going to put my household on an entirely new basis. Efficiency and economy will be my watchwords. I have arranged the whole thing in my mind. Instead of eight servants I shall keep four. Wilson must do without a footman. Françoise can help him. Mrs. Bowles must also come into line, or go. I am going to be very firm. Perhaps I can fit Corentine into my new *ménage* if she can do plain cooking."

But, alas, Corentine's cooking was entirely restricted to frying fish and making galettes—the sight of a joint would have bewildered her!—not even an omelette could she manage, for the good reason that in her home eggs were luxuries never seen.

"But I can learn," cried Corentine, hopefully. "I know a woman who cooks to a marvel, she will teach me all."

Even Aunt Anne, however, saw difficulties ahead here, so I consoled our little friend by promising to try and place her in Paris.

Aunt Anne warned her two girls to expect no bed of roses. "Hard work, plain food, a mistress with the devil of a temper! Oh yes, no laughing matter," she assured them. "Everything in the house to be done

FISHER-
MEN AS
HUS-
BANDS.

by clockwork, and to be kept clean and bright as a new pin. Low wages to begin with (she mentioned a sum beyond their wildest dreams and prayers), to be increased if they proved satisfactory and remained a year."

"We will remain ten years—twenty, perhaps," Augustine declared. "Till we die," added Françoise fervently.

"And how about Pierre and Jacques and the rest, *hein?*" enquired this prospective mistress.

"Oh, for those there we wish them adieu with the heart light and the eye dry," laughed Augustine. "The young men they are very well when one would dance the gavotte, but to take for husbands—no thanks. The men, as these ladies know very well, they make only miseries for the women—above all the fishermen. If he is good and well ranged, a thing rare enough, God knows, he is assuredly drowned by the cruel sea so soon as he has planted you with a large family which require to be nourished. If he is bad, he drinks more than the half of what he gains, and he beats the woman who has had the folly to espouse him."

"She speaks there the truth," said the two friends, solemnly.

Aunt Anne laughed. "You have, I see, my children, very sensible ideas upon the subject of marriage and an astonishing amount of experience. At your ages I imagined every man to be a hero. I wonder which is best," she added to herself.

And now the *binion* and pipes struck up a gavotte, and the young men who had been pronounced such doubtful blessings as partners for life were more indulgently treated for the dance. Corentine it is true

was more hard to please than her two friends, for though three swains hurried up to her, petitioning the honour of her hand, she shook her head to all. I asked her "Why?"

A HAND-
SOME
PÊCHEUR.

"Oh, those there they dance like young calves. I take only one who knows really to dance." She laughed contemptuously at her less critical friends as they swung past her with two of the "young calves."

Presently a tall, lithe young fisherman, with daring blue eyes and tawny hair, pushed his way through the crowd, and without a word took Corentine firmly by the hand. She held back, saying something in Breton of a protesting nature, but he held her hand as in a vice and drew her off to the dancers. Passing me a little later, he remarked, with triumph, "Me, I made her dance, see you!"

He was light and active as though on springs, a curious contrast to the "young calves," with their sabots and heavy agricultural tread. He had, besides, a look in his impudent, laughing eyes, which seemed to promise he would get his own way, not by asking, but by taking it. A dangerous type of young man! Just such eyes no doubt had Yann, the tormenting lover of poor Gaud. It surprised me that Corentine should have the strength of mind to be so determined on going away to Paris or London. Did she realise, I wondered, how different the life would be? "You know, Corentine," I warned her, "if you go as a *bonne* to England you will have no fêtes, no dances, no Pardons, and no handsome *pêcheurs*."

"My faith, but I shall be a *demoiselle* who sleeps in a white bed all alone, and not on a shelf in the wall with a young brother who kicks all the night. And I shall dwell in a great house four stories high perhaps,

THE
"GAVOTTE
D'HON-
NEUR."

and be well nourished with good soup in which to soak my bread every day. And no longer shall I be forced to work in the suffocating *usine* four nights a week till with fatigue the eyes see two sardines where there is one. Oh, I have well counted all that!"

I asked what her father and mother felt about her going.

"*Dame!* My father, that concerns him not. And for my mother, she desires greatly that I go before the winter. For in the winter, see you, my father, the unhappy one, he can gain but little, so he drinks much. When he is very drunk it arrives often that he beats my mother, and for this cause it is not agreeable, says my mother, for me to live in the house."

This bare statement of facts was made in a wholly impersonal way. Just as she had previously said, "When the sea is rough one catches no sardines. When the sardines fail we have no work in the *usine*, and so lack bread."

Our girls made a great point of our staying for the *gavotte d'honneur*, when the bunch of gay coloured ribbons suspended from a hook on the wall were awarded as prizes to the best dancers. Endurance, though not the sole, was a necessary qualification—you must be in at the death and go till the last blast of the *binion* and pipes. The dancing floor was stony, rugged and steep, it was but right endurance should count for something.

Corentine and her partner acquitted themselves with distinction, in spite of the fact that the latter was equipped with the sabots of the agriculturist. With truly Breton undemonstrativeness he handed to her the second prize, a blue ribbon she had announced as her heart's desire, but he permitted himself a smile of

satisfaction as she wound the ribbon round her white coif. It is the one touch of colour in the Concarneau girl's costume, and passes between the over and under cap, holding up the hair at the back of the head.

THE BLUE
RIBBON.

The only drop of bitterness in Corentine's cup was the fact that the blue-eyed fisherman and his partner came off with the first prize, a rose-coloured ribbon. He had deliberately sought out a big, bold-eyed girl for this gavotte, not even giving Corentine the chance of snubbing him; but he came up to her as she was showing me her prize, and for my benefit remarked, "Ha, with me, seest thou, one gains the first prize. Poor little friend! so sorry I could not take thee this time, but la belle Margot, she was breaking her heart for me," he laughed.

Corentine tossed her head and answered loftily that she preferred the blue ribbon to the rose.

"Ha, without doubt," he retorted; "that is because the blue recalls to you my eyes—eh, Mademoiselle Corentine?" and off he skipped, pretending not to hear the uncomplimentary remarks hurled after him in vehement Breton both by Corentine and her partner.

Having unearthed our *cocher* from the usual haven, we suggested to our three friends that we should drive them home, an invitation that needed no pressing.

Often, declared Corentine, had she desired to be conducted by a real carriage of the town, "but never before had the good chance arrived."

The experience of Augustine and Françoise had also been limited to a two-wheel fish *charette*.

Augustine mounted the box-seat by the driver, her square and solid person lending itself less than the rest of the party to compression. We were a goodly

FELICITY IN FRANCE.

A PROUD MOMENT.

carriage load, and it was a proud moment when the driver ostentatiously cracked his whip and everyone turned round to look at us swinging and jolting down the village street. A prouder moment still when, on the homeward route, we passed our various relations and friends tramping back on foot. With mock condescension we waved to them, and then, as the gleam of surprised recognition lit up their faces, we broke into peals of delighted laughter. We had the good fortune to pass both the father of Corentine, and that of Françoise, besides the grandmother and small sisters of the latter, and the married brother and brother-in-law of Augustine.

The worthy parent of Corentine, like many of his companions, walked somewhat erratically, and we had no little difficulty in clearing him with our wheels in the narrow lane, but a small son held him firmly by the hand, and his eye was still sufficiently clear to enable him to discern the proud position of his daughter—being driven at her ease, by a live coachman on the box, for all the world like the daughter of monsieur le Comte.

Our drive back to Concarneau was a triumphal progress, and though we passed the street in which Augustine dwelt, she entirely declined to leave us, saying she would go on "to the end" and gladly walk home. Françoise also announced her intention of only quitting us at the hotel. She lived in one of the narrow alleys of the old town or Ville Close as it is called, that quaint old island fortress which, like a veteran soldier, stands guard at the harbour mouth. The most emaciated wheelbarrow could hardly have passed down Françoise' alley, but we undertook a task quite difficult enough in promising to call at the

home of Corentine and see her mother. To reach this row of houses, situated on the edge of the *basin*, it was necessary to precipitate yourself down some steep and rocky paths unused to carriage or cart wheels, but Corentine's highest ambition was to be seen on this red-letter day, and by as many of her friends as possible, actually driving up to the door. Fortunately the driver, after one grim warning that we must take the responsibility of the horse's knees, thoroughly entered into the spirit of the situation, and performed a truly marvellous feat in conveying us down a sort of rocky watershoot to the little row of low-roofed houses. An admiring audience peered at us from doors and windows; our three girls greeted them with shrieks of laughter.

THE HOME
OF COREN-
TINE.

To our disappointment two small brothers were the only members of Corentine's family at home, her mother being, a neighbour told us, still down at the river, washing.

We were invited to enter. The house consisted of one room with a loft overhead in which the wood for the winter was stored. In this one room the father and mother and five children lived, slept and kept all their worldly goods. It was very clean and tidy. Only one big bed was to be seen until Corentine drew aside some curtains which revealed two beds in the wall *à la mode de Bretagne*. In the better houses these are closed in by carved sliding doors, like the bed at Riec, but in Corentine's little home a curtain served instead. "Two of us sleep in each of these beds in the wall—three in the big bed. With a numerous family one must arrange as one can," she observed philosophically.

The only furniture was the substantial *armoire* or

**BRETON
MOTHERS.**

linen press, to be seen in the poorest dwelling, a small dresser with a few odd plates and bowls, two or three chairs and a little cupboard.

In one corner of the room lay a pile of blue fishing nets which Corentine had just finished re-dyeing and mending. The colour soon washes out, and the nets are so fine they require constant mending. She showed us the mesh, very small and fine, also the straws with which she gauffres her big white collar.

The two small brothers watched her with wide awestruck eyes. The familiar sister was passing into regions beyond their ken, driving in carriages and talking French with strange ladies who laughed and joked with her as though she were a friend. What next they wondered.

A small silver coin in the palm of each child turned their speculations into a personal and more satisfactory direction.

We packed into our carriage again and drove off to the river, where all the laundresses assemble to wash and gossip.

The river runs through a meadow just beyond the port. The women kneel in rows along the banks. Our arrival created a most edifying sensation, as we intended it should, for were not our three mothers among the spectators!

Corentine's mother was standing at a tub apart. I was conducted to her and introduced, while Aunt Anne went off to see the respective parents of Augustine and Françoise. She continued steadily pounding her clothes in the tub and looked at me fixedly without speaking. As she spoke only the Breton, conversation was difficult in any case, but she did not seem desirous of wasting words even in that tongue, merely nodding

her head and emitting an occasional grunt in reply to her daughter, who acted as interpreter. She indicated by a slight relaxation of her rigid features that she approved Corentine's desire to go to Paris—she was willing, in fact, to let her go with me there and then to the North Pole if I liked to take her. "Anything to make one less in the house when the winter arrives," said poor Corentine, "for then there is no work in the *usines* and I gain little—so little, and the hunger increases rather than diminishes with the cold."

A DRUIDICAL DAME.

I assured this Druidical-looking dame I would do my utmost to help her child, shook hands, and we exchanged *adieux*, the only word she addressed to me.

Aunt Anne's interviews had been much of the same character, chiefly no doubt, owing to the difficulty of tongues, but all was arranged to everyone's apparent satisfaction. The two girls were to enter her service on her return to England if they had found nothing they preferred in the meantime. They were to be free, and Aunt Anne also, till that time. If both parties were then still of the same mind, a binding engagement would be entered upon.

The girls were somewhat disheartened at this postponement. They were ready to start to-morrow. But knowing how often Aunt Anne's household is liable to be projected on a new basis, I felt relieved that she had left herself a loophole.

An admiring group assisted us to pack into our carriage again, all three girls insisting they must accompany us to our hotel. There at last we parted, for we were off to Quimper next day. Tears were in Corentine's pretty brown eyes as she begged me not to forget her.

A BAD
ADIEU

"Never, never shall I forget Mademoiselle," she assured me; "I shall pray the blessed Virgin that some day I may be her *bonne*."

"Take her," said Augustine. "Mademoiselle will not regret it—Corentine is more clever than both we other two. So quickly she packs the sardines she gains every time two sous more than I can in the day. Her collar she gauffres like new, she mends the blue nets so that no one can find where the hole has been. As for the children, she adores them and they her. Oh, Corentine is a good girl and very useful," declared her friend.

I promised to do my utmost to find her a happy place among my friends in Paris. Alas that for myself I had no collars to gauffre, nets to mend, or even babies to tend!

* * * * *

I did not forget Corentine, and some months later, when in Paris, succeeded in finding her a place which I had good reason to hope she would fill to everyone's satisfaction, including her own. Alas, the end of a month's service saw my little sardine friend back among the *filets-bleus*, for which she had suffered so severely the *mal du pays*, there was no remedy otherwise.

The moral of this little postscript is obvious.

FROM IS TO BLOIS.

We left Finistère without hearing the "bells of Is." Aunt Anne refused to believe in them, a fact in itself enough to spoil the conditions for hearing. It was a point on which we came near quarrelling.

THE
BELLS
OF IS.

" Oh bells of Is, oh bells of Is,
Deaf were the heart and ears
That never heard you ringing
Your psalm of vanished years."*

I quoted with perhaps a certain note of reproach in my tone. To my surprise, Aunt Anne, who has an excellent memory, though not much given to modern poetry, replied promptly with another quotation from the same delightful poem.

" Cease! Let be!--
Let me hear the rush of the billow,
The plash of the wind-rippled sea,
The noise of the wind in the cordage,
The shriek, if you will, of the blast,—
But not that ghostly ringing
From the bells of a buried Past!"*

Yet why, if the city of Is still stands beneath the sea in the grim Baie des Trépassés, swallowed whole as Finistère history records, and the bells and their strong tower still endure, should they not ring, swung by the stormy waters on dark nights, and who knows,

* Clifford Harrison.

THE
CRUEL
BAY.

on grey, still, mysterious afternoons, such as we had that day, by the hands, perhaps, of Dahut herself?

We were standing on the torn ragged rocks of the Point du Raz, looking right out to sea over the bay that holds so many dark secrets, and far away, to the endless ocean beyond—ominously still that day, for at all seasons of the year this is the headquarters of storms and gales.

The Baie des Trépassés is beautiful and cruel even as the famous Dahut. Many victims yearly are swept on to those wild rocks. The sea whirls, rushes and eddies, devouring and tearing the very rocks themselves, making an arch of the long sharp Point du Raz by piercing right through it. For miles around the wild winds and gales permit nothing to grow, no tree or human habitation to lift its head. Even the light-house must crouch to the stature of a dwarf. Driving from Douarnenez to the Point du Raz, one felt on the edge of the world, just clinging to the torn brown fringe of Mother Earth's raiment.

Aunt Anne could not avoid believing in the buried city. Every fisherman at Douarnenez confirms the story, and anyone can see for themselves the remains of an old Roman wall in the Baie des Trépassés, with its strong cement and great stones resisting to the last the devouring sea. Still it is called in the Breton tongue, "Wall of Is," and a small creek in the bay holds its secret also in the name by which it is known, "Poul-Dahut," for it was there the wicked and beautiful daughter of King Grallon gave herself at last to the avenging sea.

Is was a great and prosperous city in the days of Grallon, the sixth century, and the capital of Cornouailles. The mighty sluice-gates kept the ocean in

check, and the king himself, with a big silver key, opened the gates once a month, admitting just the amount of water needed for the use of the city.

THE
PRINCESS
DAHUT.

Grallon had one daughter, Dahut, a bewildering combination of beauty and wickedness, both in a supreme degree. She ruled at Court. Her lovers were numerous as the pebbles on the sea shore, in spite of the fact that every night the favoured one for that brief hour of rapture and madness, met a sudden and tragic death. It was said a black man, riding at furious speed, might be seen bearing the lifeless body of the victim towards the mountains. In proof of this story, also doubted by Aunt Anne, I would mention that from a deep abyss in the rocks of Huel-Goat may be often heard strange sighs and groans, which the shepherds of l'Arrée, surely in a better position to know than Aunt Anne, declare come from these poor misguided young men, the lovers of Dahut, begging the passers-by to pray for the peace of their souls.

But to return to Dahut. She became ever more and more arrogant, usurping entirely at last her father's rule, together with the great silver key, symbol of his kingship—herself undertaking the opening of the sluice-gates. This last act roused the wrath and vengeance of the Sea, who had always viewed with resentment the pride and independence which dared to dictate limits to her own sway. Mindful of this, the king had performed the ceremony with respect and even reverence, praying the Sea for her favour and bounty, thus salving over the obnoxious fact of the sluice-gates. But Dahut prayed no prayers and showed no reverence, she treated the mighty Sea as one of her vassals, or as a huge mastiff, whom she held by a strong chain.

REVENGE
OF THE
SEA.

One day the Abbé of Landévennec rushed into the presence of the king crying to him to flee for his life, as the Sea had arisen in her might, roaring and foaming she had broken through the sluice-gates and was calling down vengeance on the evil doings of Dahut. The king sprang to his horse, and seizing his daughter, attempted to save her with himself. But it was too late. The ocean had already covered the whole city of Is, and as horse and rider raced wildly inland, the angry waves rushed after, and a voice cried from out the dark stormy waters, "I claim the wicked Dahut, she shall not escape." Then Dahut knew that her hour had in truth come, and bidding her father farewell, she flung herself into the sea and instantly disappeared. In the same moment the waters, which almost covered the horse, retreated, and Grallon continued his way in sore grief to Quimper. From that time he made the latter town the capital of Cornouailles in place of the lost city; for the Sea claimed Is, together with its wicked princess, and never more retreated. So there, between the jagged teeth of that cruel bay, lies the buried city, and what more likely, after all, than that Dahut, on still, calm nights, should ring the old bells, calling good people to pray for the pardon and peace of her stormy soul!

* * * * *

We had but a flying glimpse of Douarnenez and its blue nets. It was the life of Concarneau on a rather bigger scale—the same rows of women knitting and chatting on the low sea-wall—only more of them, the same brown red-sailed boats, only more of them. At every turn subjects for a painter's brush, and colour to delight his heart, in sea and sky, in sails and nets, blue gossamer nets, yellow oilskin jackets and

dark-blue or red jerseys of the fishermen, the many-coloured shawls and aprons of the women, their blue-black hair (one saw few tawny heads here) shining beneath the close-fitting lace cap of Douarnenez.

AN OLD
FRENCH
CRAN-
FORD.

Everywhere one was conscious of sardines. The precious little fish arrive here rather later in the year than at Concarneau, but in even greater shoals. The harbour was full of boats, the town full of factories and kitchens—blue nets and yellow oilskins hung drying from windows, doors, and walls. Everyone talked and smelt, too, of sardines, in spite of a stiff sea breeze, which seemed to come right across the ocean from the other side of the world.

Through rocks and woods, gorse and heather, back to Quimper. How safe Grallon must have felt when he reached Quimper! Instead of being perched on the very jumping-off place of France, a rocky promontory, stretching with hardy daring far out into the ocean, here was a quiet sheltered valley, connected with the dangerous sea by a long winding river, peaceful and serene, protected by a steep hillside, covered with dark pines and chestnuts, watching over their city like trusty sentinels.

Quimper suggests delightful possibilities of old-fashioned French life of the Cranford type. The Odet runs through the town, and all along the left bank are dignified little town houses standing in small secluded gardens, each with its own private bridge and wrought-iron gate across the river. From the pine woods on the hill side you look all over the old city, with its grand twin-towers of St. Corentin as the centre of interest, while far away one can follow the winding Odet down to the wide mouth of the sea. Soldiers and nuns have their headquarters at Quimper,

ST.
ANTOINE
DE PADUA.

but the former have "chased" a considerable number of the latter in these last years.

Market day at Quimper revealed to us some interesting new varieties of coifs, though the floating ends of those of Quimper itself are not half so attractive as when caught up in a loop like those of Concarneau. The tight-fitting lace cap of Douarnenez is delightful with the blue-black hair as a background, but types of beauty were rare even among young girls. The market was busy but not lively—we found ourselves buying only what we wanted, instead of being lured into three dozen red mullet or a huge pumpkin. Gertruda bought an image of St. Corcutin and I a minute St. Antoine de Padua, without whom no one apt to lose their property should dream of travelling, this kind-hearted saint making it his special business to find all lost or strayed goods. We paid for these saints their fixed price without any bargaining, and in this instance felt the fitness of the Breton custom in a manner not perhaps brought home when buying red mullet and pumpkins.

* * * * *

From Quimper we worked eastward again, making a little *détour* from Grouet up to Le Faouët in the Montagnes Noirs.

These Montagnes Noirs, which sound so grim and severe, turned out to be pleasant genial green hills and slopes. We experienced the same relief as when having been warned to beware of the dog at the inn a pleasant little toy spaniel ran out wagging a friendly tail in welcome.

It is worth going to Brittany to see le Faouët, though it means a long drive uphill in the craziest vehicle ever drawn by a fourfooted beast. And it is

worth going to Le Faouët if only to see Ste Barbe though that means a pilgrimage, perforce made on foot, up the steepest of rocky mountain paths to where the old church, like an eagle's nest imbedded in the side of the rock, overhangs a precipice at the foot of which sings and dances the light-hearted little river Ellé.

A MIRACLE
CHURCH.

The story is that the Sieur de Toulbodou, out hunting in a storm, was about to be crushed by a falling block of the rock, when he called on Ste Barbe, promising her a nice chapel on the spot if she would save him. She arrested the block *en route* to his head, for there was not a moment to lose, and the following day, the Sieur, equally prompt, set his masons to work where the miracle had been wrought.

You reach the church by a steep stone stair and balustrade. On a bridge of stone overhead stands a tiny chapel dedicated to St. Michel, a saint who crops up at every turn of the road in Brittany. Near the custodian's little house rises a tall belfry, and once a year, when the "Pardon" of Ste Barbe is held, every pilgrim makes a point of pulling that bell, just to notify to the saint the praiseworthy effort his presence indicates.

It was hard work to tear ourselves away from Le Faouët. The wild lovely country—quite out of the tourist beat—the splendid air of the hills, the old market hall, with its wonderful roof absolutely unique, they say there is not another like it in France—and above all our landlady and her kitchen,—all fascinated us. The landlady and her kitchen are as unique as the roof of the market, and are inseparable. You enter the kitchen in entering the inn, and Madame greets you with her beneficent smile, surrounded by

AN IDEAL
LAND-
LADY.

polished pans and cauldrons, the ruddy glow of her huge range reflected on her strong handsome face, her hands invariably busy with some excellent item of the coming repast. Old oak beams arch over her head, she looks like a genial sorceress at work, as indeed she is. Her maidens fly hither and thither at her word, the results at our *déjeuner* and dinner are such as to make Madame's *cuisine* highly popular. She has two tables, one for her *internes*, and another in the kitchen itself for the *externes* who drop in without ceremony. This table is a curiosity in itself, many hundred years old, says Madame, of thick solid oak, with slits here and there through which the money passes into the drawer below. A safe and sensible plan in the good old days when cider flowed freely and quarrels rose high.

We jolted down to Quimperlé next day in the weird conveyance which takes the letters and goes by the name of the "Poste." Being the only passengers besides the letters, the driver kindly allowed us to descend for a few minutes on the way to look at Saint Fiacre, another marvel in churches. We waded through a farm yard, the dirtiest ever seen, ankle deep in mire, over pigs, geese and ducks, turned a corner, and lo, the most dainty and exquisite vision of fifteenth century art at its best. Saint Fiacre has a Pardon once a year, otherwise it stands deserted behind the farm yard and outhouses, a jewel in the swine's snout, not even to be seen from the road, where it would rejoice the eyes of every traveller.

* * * * *

As we dropped down upon Quimperlé it looked like a town of trees and gardens. Even the walls were green with trailing creepers, and moss and fern grew

between the stones and in the niches of the old church of St. Michel. A Sleepy Hollow little town, and so determined not to be disturbed that it has placed its station well out of sight and earshot, a good two kilometres from the town. Old coats of arms and armorial bearings are to be seen over many an ancient doorway reminding one that in the good old days here were the town houses of many great families of Brittany, nearly all gone now, or at least so overgrown with time's moss and lichen as to be, like their coats of arms, no longer recognisable.

SLEEPY
HOLLOW.

Aunt Anne went out for a solitary ramble, and returned, as usual, having had an adventure and "such an interesting time my dear!"

Coming out of the church she had fallen into conversation with an old lady in deep mourning. "The sort of raiment" said Aunt Anne, "that one felt had become a part of herself, the expression of her thought and spirit; a shabby though unspeakably dignified garb, which will only be laid aside when the owner herself lays aside the poor tired body."

In spite of the evident poverty and care written plainly in the thin pinched old face, Aunt Anne had recognised the unmistakable stamp of the *grande dame*, and as they walked together towards the battered old palace in the rue du Chateau the old lady spoke of the past of Quimperlé and of her own family, of whom she was the last survivor. Once they had been great princes in Brittany, but the Revolution had ruined them. Her one consolation was the old church of St. Michel. Still she knelt on the same spot where her ancestors had knelt. Still she prayed in the very words hallowed by their lips, and soon the same holy Church would console her also with the last rites, and

A HAVEN
OF
REFUGE.

her spirit would rejoin those dear and honoured ones who had passed on before.

"The poor old dear attends every service of the Church" said Aunt Anne, "and spends hours there before the altar of Marie when the church is empty. That is how I first saw her, looking like a veritable Mater Dolorosa. She lives alone with her two faithful old servants, a man and his wife, in the big grey house with all the green shutters closed."

Interesting as this encounter had been Aunt Anne was distinctly depressed by it. She pictured sad broken lives behind all the closed shutters and grey walls, and it was with no regret she sent a last look at Quimperlé next day, though loud in its praises as one of the most picturesque of garden cities.

"And now for Blois," she said, in remarkably cheerful tones, as the train whirled us rapidly away.

A CITY OF THE RENAISSANCE.

Blois is truly a marvellous old city. Fine sculptured archways, Louis XI. turreted towers, François I^{er} salamanders and ornate carvings, greet you in dilapidated old side streets and alleys and at all sorts of unexpected corners.

A LAND OF
PLENTY.

Old books, engravings, brocades, and antiquities of every description beckon you from ancient shop windows. It is a place of deadly temptation for anyone with Aunt Anne's tastes, and the chaperon had hard work to get her to move along at all. The grand old château is one of the finest perhaps in France, and, as the old custodian proudly claimed, a standing record of the most thrilling pages in French history. But I must return to that custodian later.

If you desire to market, as we did directly we had swallowed our morning coffee, five market places await you, in tiers one above the other all the way up the hill on which the town is piled. It is not possible to drive about Blois if one would see it properly. It is necessary to walk or climb up flights of steps which lead from one place to another, or by little winding side streets of steep steps cut in the rock.

Here was a market that rejoiced Aunt Anne's heart. The fruits of a land, not of gorse and heather like our beautiful though barren Finistère, but of milk and honey, wine and oil, peaches and plums, fat turkeys and capons, monster pumpkins and cheeses and

AN OLD
FRENCH
INN.

everything else you can think of, from pearl chains to prize pigs. Here you could bargain to your heart's content, everyone was chattering and shrieking like the inhabitants of the parrot house at the Zoo. Grapes were two sous a pound, it seemed hardly worth while paying for them, but they were well worth eating. Peaches, any of which were worthy of a horticultural prize, three sous and even two sous apiece.

We returned laden to our hotel and made our *déjeuner* off fruit instead of joining the *table d'hôte*, which greatly distressed *madame la patronne*, especially since, as she pointed out, we were paying for our meals in any case. We promised to make up for all deficiencies at dinner.

Our hotel was an ancient old-fashioned inn, rightly recommended for its pleasant landlady and excellent cooking; but there were drawbacks, one being the fearsome odours which mounted to our open windows from heaven knew where; another, that though a notice signified that on ringing twice a housemaid would appear, no amount of bell ringing ever produced a glimpse of such a person. The summons was invariably answered by a wild-looking waiter. Gertruda found him making the beds the morning after our arrival, and sent him flying. On hearing this I determined to have it out with him. In answer to my double ring he appeared, breathless, distracted, a knife and wine glass in one hand, a pillow in the other.

"I rang for the *femme-de-chambre*. What is the reason that you always appear in her place?" I demanded sternly.

The miserable man squirmed and gulped—then in desperation :

"It is I, see you, Madame, who am the *femme-de-chambre*. There exists no other!"

IN THE
PETITE
BOUR-
GEOISIE.

The *cuisine* was deservedly renowned and made our hotel a favourite place with the townspeople for wedding breakfasts, as we found next day to our cost, the whole place being turned upside down by a smart *noce*. The big salon was appropriated for dancing, the little salon as a cloak room, the courtyard invaded by the children of the party, who occupied their spare hours marching up and down playing the Marseillaise on penny whistles and trumpets, penetrating instruments, both.

Aunt Anne was richly compensated, however, for all discomfort by the intense interest she found in the bridal party.

It was a very *chic* marriage, the bride being one of the best *partis* in her set, with a pretty little *dot* of 80,000 francs, while the lucky man was a prosperous *épicier* in Paris. The family of the bride had become unexpectedly enriched about three years before by the death of an uncle whose wealth no one had suspected, his life having been severely laborious, and simple to a degree that would have satisfied Pastor Wagner. The wedding party, about fifty in all, consisted almost entirely of relations, chief among whom was the peasant proprietor *grand'mère* in her white cap. The old *bonne* of the deceased uncle and the two nurses of the juvenile members also took their places at *déjeuner* among the guests. The ladies were simply dressed, in *demi-toilette*, the bride in white, her "maids" each garbed according to her own fancy regardless of uniformity. The men were weird-looking beings, a cross between magpie and jackdaw. Their costume suggested the uncle's funeral three years ago, rather than a wedding. Black swallowtail coats, white cravats, black tall hats, and

THE
WEDDING
FEAST.

white gloves. The wedding breakfast lasted till four o'clock ; then the party drove round the outskirts of the town and through those fine modern streets that permit of a carriage, and went in state to be photographed.

I forgot to mention that the two marriages, religious and civil, had both been performed in the morning before the party took possession of our hotel.

At seven o'clock, incredible as it may seem, the fifty sat down at their long table again, and, with undiminished vigour, attacked a nearly three hours' dinner. The baby of eight months was the only one who fell out of the running and dropped asleep at the table after holding up valiantly till eight o'clock. He was removed to a crib in the cloak-room, where Aunt Anne discovered him an hour later, just opening dismayed eyes on a row of unresponsive cloaks. She soon had him in her arms, quite content if he never saw nurse or mother again in this life. At ten o'clock the heroic fifty began to dance, not lazy, drowsy, dreamy waltzes, but good stirring polkas and galops, and this, with intervals of song, they kept up till one in the morning. But that was not the end. Next day the whole party, including bride and bridegroom, turned up again smiling, the children cheerful as ever, even if a shade paler, and at twelve o'clock behold them again hard at work on a serious *déjeuner*, devoid of ornate decoration, but solid and plentiful. The whole company wore their everyday clothes—the bride in black with a lace collar, the men in frock coats, coloured ties and gloves, the latter a relief after the depressing festal garb of the day before.

A temporary chambermaid was called in to replace the wild waiter, whose services were in constant demand downstairs. She was a neat brisk body,

overflowing with conversation. I enquired from her whether it was customary for the bride to reappear at the "after *déjeuner*," and if so when the *voyage de nocce* was supposed to take place.

UNE
AFFAIRE
BIZARRE.

"*Ma foi*," she replied, "some do one way, some another. For me I find that the marriage, it is a bizarre affair whichever fashion you take it. To go *en voyage* alone with a strange man, that is an experience to some girls little attractive—on the other hand, to remain after the marriage has consummated itself, and meet all your relations, who are regarding you with curiosity, the next day at breakfast, that would not sing to every young girl either. It is an embarrassing situation, in my opinion."

I asked if she herself had found the courage to face it. In reply, she poured out not only her own experiences, but those of an unhappy Comtesse with whom she had lived as maid. No details shirked, and most interesting, but somewhat discouraging had it been addressed to a bride. My sympathetic manner led her to suppose I had been through the mill myself. When I told her I had not, she apologised for her *franchise*, and hoped what she had said would in no way act as a deterrent. A curious feature to be noticed in most married women whose experiences have been unenviable, is that they would not for worlds hinder another woman from taking the same fatal step.

My friend the chambermaid assured me that had it not been for the Dames Blanches of Tours never could she have supported her life. It was they who took her, when a little forsaken orphan of seven years old, and brought her up in their orphanage. They gave her good food, clothes and teaching, and patient loving

THE
DAMES
BLANCHES.

care, which replaced to her the lost father and mother. When she left them to go out into service they provided her with fifty francs, and on her marriage, some years later, with her trousseau. When she was ill and deserted by her husband, who, alas, "turned badly," they got her into the hospital which the Dames Blanches supply with nurses, and arranged that she should not have even the usual two francs a week to pay, nor the chemist's bill after. "And these are the women one would chase from our poor France!" she sighed.

Not long ago a commissioner of police came to her door. "You were brought up by the Dames Blanches?" he asked—and then followed minute questions, trying to get evidence of ill-treatment of some sort. On her saying that she had only good to recount he left her in disgust, declaring she was the first he had questioned who had not complaints of some sort to make. "The reason?" "Oh, those miserable ones, they hope by that means to gain some money from the Government."

* * * * *

The château of Blois is a wonderful place. It is not in a commanding position like Langeais, Amboise, Luynes, and Loches, for the walls start down on the level of the Loire. But stand at the foot of the great fortress and look up from the ancient moat, and you get an idea of the immensity of it all.

To enter the château one must mount—one is always mounting in Blois. The custodian appointed to show us over was a great character. He made a regular oration in each apartment and hall, and gave us at least three volumes of French history in language worthy of the Collège de France. It was really an

admirable history lesson, and his method of delivery inimitable!

A PROFESSOR OF
HISTORY.

"Advance a little, you, Madame, and mark well what I am about to observe to you. Make place, if you please, Monsieur, so that all may profit."

To two boys among the number he gave special attention, telling them they must have something to answer when their friends asked what they had seen at the château of Blois. Having got us all well into line he pointed out some architectural beauty or peculiarity, compared it with the period preceding and succeeding, and then rehearsed the lesson.

Standing in the grand entrance and facing the ugly wing wrought by the would-be reformer Mansard, he execrated this mischievous gentleman and the ill-inspired master Gaston d'Orléans, for whom he worked. "They did enough mischief between them, as you can perceive," said our guide; "but happily *le bon Dieu* removed the Duke before he had time to touch the rest of the palace, otherwise they had the evil intention of rebuilding even the wing of François and that incomparable work of art, the '*escalier à jour*.'"

He directed our attention to that wonderful piece of architecture, and having examined it from the outside, pointed out the marvellous beauty of the interior. Our enthusiasm he viewed with restrained approval; it was right to admire the staircase, "but one must not interrupt the flow of the discourse, see you?"

Who made this wonderful creation in stone? Alive and alert as some rare tall-stemmed flower revealing so vividly the personality of a creator, that even, as with a beautiful picture or exquisite melody,

THE COUP
D'ÉTAT OF
1588.

one longs to know, who made it! Our guide could not say, but told us the spiral staircase was generally attributed, though without his (our guide's) own particular sanction, to Jean Goujon who did so much work for François I^{er}.

In the chamber where the Duc de Guise was assassinated, our instructor marshalled us round the spot where the victim fell and painted in really dramatic language the whole grim tragedy, giving every detail of that December morning. Henri III. crouching behind the arras in his little cabinet, watching unseen the murder of his enemy by nine hired assassins. The plucky desperate resistance of the Guise—Catherine de Médicis in her gorgeously painted apartment on the floor above, impatiently awaiting her cowardly son, and her historic reply when he burst in with the news that the Guise was finished: "*C'est bien coupé—mais il faut à présent coudre.*" The cardinal brother of the Guise in his dark cell but a few mysterious steps from the scene of the murder, himself to be dealt with in the same style on the morrow. In the royal apartments of Henri II. and Catherine de Médicis, our conductor relaxed his grand classic manner and unbent to a humorous touch! The walls were covered with the royal fleur-de-lis, and the initials entwined of H. and C. He pointed out how by introducing two C's, an apparent compliment to his Queen, the cunning Henri had in reality made a D out of the second and reversed C—thus admitting even into the royal nuptial chamber the syren Diane de Poitiers.

"In this manner he endeavoured to please both, the poor man," said our guide, with evident sympathy

for the situation. But when Aunt Anne made a joking remark by way of reply, he pulled her up sternly :

"Enough of joking ; we proceed now to the serious affairs of history contained in this fine monument of France."

SALA-
MANDER
AND
HEDGE-
HOG.

The hedgehog of Louis XII. and the salamander of the gorgeous François I^{er} ran each other hard on walls, ceilings, doorways, fireplaces, and chapels, mixed generally in the case of Louis XII. with the initial and device, the ermine and festooned cord, of his respected Queen, Anne de Bretagne ; a lady very fully conscious of her own value, never would she have permitted a second reading of any rival name in her device. Catherine's despotic rule, curiously enough, does not seem to have included her husband. She bided her time, and had it out with Diane, however, as soon as widowhood gave her a free hand, packing her out of her beloved Chenonceau and taking possession of it herself.

The château at Blois has a story connected with every room, and every staircase, almost each window could tell a separate tale, notably one from which Queen Marie de Médicis, prisoner of her sombre son Louis XIII. and his all-powerful adviser Richelieu, escaped by a ladder of ropes. She must have been an agile lady, even with fear to strengthen her muscles, for the height makes one dizzy looking down on the moat from that window.

The château has served all purposes in its day, which dates from the sixth century ; a prison, a fortress, a royal residence, and has been the centre of all the lurid and varied scenes which Blois has witnessed. Our professor gave us nearly two hours' discourse and we felt we ought to pay a professor's fee for so

A PALACE
IN THE
WOODS.

much instruction. To make up for this, however, we joined to our hopelessly inadequate payment the expressions of our warmest admiration and gratitude, which pleased him vastly, and was more than did any of his own compatriots.

In accordance with the urgent advice of our custodian, before leaving Blois we drove over to Chambord, well posted by him with the things we must not fail to observe. He was as good as Mr. Henry James, Mr. Augustus Hare, and Mr. T. A. Cook rolled into one superb combination. I only wished the soil in which he planted had been better prepared.

On our way to Chambord we passed through quiet little villages where everyone seemed to be away for the day, no children or dogs ran out to greet us either with joy or wrath, but the acres and acres of vineyards surrounding these *petits pays* as our driver called the villages, gave a look of assured prosperity and plenty, each vine laden as it was with heavy purple bunches fast ripening for harvest in the gorgeous sunshine which blessed us every day.

Chambord is gigantic, magnificent, fantastic, full of surprises such as the grand royal double staircase, up which two people can walk at the same time without seeing each other, and the carved stone balcony running along the top of the façade and the marvellous sculptured domes and pinnacles, and the groups of delightful cherubs perched on the stone copings of the windows—an endless variety, looking as if they had flown straight out of Boucher's and Watteau's "*Fêtes Champêtres*," and been turned to stone by the sorcerer inside the magic palace.

Aunt Anne's large spirit took special delight in

—she longed to act hostess in such a place. But for me my heart quailed before those fifteen staircases and five hundred rooms and halls and endless corridors. It would take me ten years to learn my way about this vast pile of stone. Also I was conscious of keen disappointment in the appearance of Chambord. It was not the château I had pictured from certain fascinating old prints and engravings, notably one in the museum at Oxford, surrounded by a moat well filled with water, across which was a bridge guarded by lions. Another picture depicted a meet—gay cavaliers on prancing horses, lovely ladies in gilded coaches; but the real Chambord gave me none of these good things, neither water, bridge, lion or hunter. Its glory has departed. The stage background is there, but the players are gone. Ah! to have been at Chambord the night that Molière produced "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" before the king and all his court—a "first night" not to be easily forgotten.

IN THE
OLDEN
DAYS.

It was in the *fossés* of this château that the Maréchal de Saxe, from whom George Sand claimed descent, fought the famous duel with the Prince de Conti, from which he died. Passing in natural sequence from the slaying of Field Marshals to stags and wild boar, our guide informed us there was plenty of good shooting in the woods, but the present owner, the Duc de Parme, comes to Chambord rarely, and when he does so, goes in more for the *tir à pied* (i.e. pheasant and partridges) than the *chasse à cheval*.

Aunt Anne and I had a discussion as to whether it was in this forest or that of Fontainebleau where Louis the Magnificent chased the famous stag which moved the gentle heart of Louise de la Vallière to pity, and her pity the heart of the ever susceptible

**DEPARTED
GLORY.** king. It was referred to Gertruda, who with German thoroughness not only read up all the guide books but remembered them. Her verdict was against Chambord, in spite of the fact that the king first saw the fair Louise at Blois.

These are degenerate days for Chambord; not only has the glory departed, but the ugly and very inglorious spirit of the tourist reigns in its place, and the lodge of the *concierge* is a shop, where at twice the usual price you can buy picture postcards, pincushions, pottery and other souvenirs of the château.

A MUNICIPAL FÊTE.

TOURS was *en fête* the day we arrived. The quiet old-world streets and squares swarmed with people. Flags were flying, garlands waving, chinese lanterns hanging from triumphal arches across all the main streets and avenues.

POPULAR
REJOIC-
INGS.

A new Hôtel-de-Ville was to be opened the following day, Sunday, and people from all the country-side were coming in to stay with their town relations and see the fête.

Dreading the inevitable motor-plague at all the big hotels, we sought out a quiet retiring little inn, with an old-fashioned green courtyard, as yet unmolested by the aggressive sounds and smells of the great dragon. Here we could open our windows to the sweet night air without fear of the odour of petrol and the angry snorts and explosions which are apt to startle you out of your first sleep with the conviction that a Revolution is upon you.

The chimes from many towers and convents announced the fête at early dawn. The streets were soon alive with people hurrying to mass.

Trains, trams, carts and carriages brought in relays from all the surrounding districts. Marmoutier, Luynes, Montlouis, Amboise, etc. Every village sent a deputation. Every deputation brought a band and a gorgeous banner. Every family and every member of every family came to see the great show

WOMEN OF
TOURAINE.

and enjoy the fête. The women in white embroidered cap, quaint little pointed cape, and dress, dark grey or black, looked charming. They are very handsome, the women of Touraine, with a fine proud bearing as of good race. One notices it also in the men. No doubt it is a look that comes from dwelling on their own land, and feeling their feet planted firmly on the soil of their "belle Touraine," for no farmer or landlord is able to give the peasant proprietor of Touraine a week's notice to quit.

The townspeople quite lack this distinguished air. But the crude fashions of Tours are regarded with envy by the younger country women, and many a one is casting aside her charming white coif, with its dainty fine embroidery so cunningly framing her dark hair and oval face, for the aggressively vulgar erections which women place on their unhappy heads in the name of Fashion.

The French have the art of enjoying themselves, and they do it *en famille*, too. Hand in hand, parents and children, husbands and wives, generally a *grand'mère* and often a *grandpère* also, formed long strings across the street. Music was a great feature of the fête, and the Marseillaise a great feature of the music. We had it banged out on drums, roared out on brass trumpets, squeaked out on fifes and flutes and penny whistles. Even Aunt Anne, who declares she has no ear for music, knew that tune by four o'clock in the afternoon.

After the *grand' messe* was over we strolled into the fine old cathedral—both exterior and interior a splendid witness to those grand old architects and builders whose race has become extinct, together with the people that demanded their creations and

scorned to count the cost. Could anyone now, even with unlimited time and money, either design or copy such a façade as that of the cathedral of Tours or those wonderful outspread wings, the flying buttresses.

On one side stand the ancient cloisters, on the other rises the "archevêché," with its fine old Renaissance gateway, the small side door always ajar, for here dwells the archbishop, known as "*le Père du peuple*," and his door, like his heart, is open at all hours of the day to his people. In the cathedral many were coming and going at a small side chapel, "Our Lady of Perpetual Succour," the altar of which was decorated to represent the Grotto of Lourdes, the Virgin appearing among the green branches and ferns clothed in white and blue as described by Bernadette in her vision, a "mystic rose" on each foot.

A pilgrimage was announced as starting that week under the auspices of the Archbishop, and special services were being held daily, praying for a blessing on the pilgrims.

But others beside the faithful entered the beautiful old church. An aggressive tourist, his hat firmly planted on his head, accompanied by two young women in the bicycle costume of France, marched in and out of the chapels, pursued by the old sacristan. A furious altercation took place in tones which echoed jarringly through the ancient aisles.

"Many freethinkers enter here," said the indignant old man, "but never have I seen one who had not courtesy and respect enough for this sacred place to uncover his head."

"Each one has the liberty in France to follow his

A FRENCH
FREE-
THINKER.

own principles, and is answerable only to his own conscience," retorted the tourist.

This was too much for Aunt Anne. She advanced, the light of battle in her eye.

"Monsieur is French?" she enquired, freezingly, but without waiting for an answer. "I thank God that at least I am spared the shame of your being of my nation. There was a moment in which I feared, seeing that you were a stranger and carried a guide-book——"

"I am a Frenchman and a freethinker. No man shall interfere with the liberty of my thought," said the man in grandiose tones, while the girls looked at him as though he had heroically imperilled his life for his principles.

"Liberty is a fine thing, Monsieur, but you appear to think you should possess the sole monopoly. The courageous old sacristan did but his duty, for you would deprive those who have the right to pray here of the peace and quiet necessary. You respect neither this sacred building nor your fellow countrymen nor yourself. Strange indeed must be the principles which make you remove your hat in a confectioner's shop, but oblige you to refuse to do so here!"

The man bit his lip, looked down, and snatched off his hat, angrily muttering as he turned away. The two bicyclists followed, urging him to replace his hat and make no attention to the impertinences of "old eccentrics" and "sacristans." But the "confectioner" touch in Aunt Anne's argument had proved too much for the tourist, reducing as it did the fine, independent attitude of the freethinker to a merely commonplace question of manners. He left the cathedral by the

shortest cut without even having a laugh at the poor little Grotto of Lourdes.

WATCHING
"LIFE."

The Cathedral and the Hôtel de Ville, the Arch-évêque and the Préfet shared the honours of the day, all the people flocking to the former in the morning, the latter in the afternoon. The balance of religious and secular power appears still to be very even at Tours, the Cathedral standing for just as much in the popular mind as the Hôtel de Ville. No doubt this is owing to the immense personal influence of "*le Père du peuple*."

Monsieur le Préfet made a speech, other messieurs followed, and there was a great deal of patriotic applause and patriotic music, which made every one very hot and thirsty. The cafés and restaurants with their little tables in the street were always crowded.

The theatres and circuses and café-chantants gave free performances in honour of the occasion on both Sunday and Monday night, for the fête continued for forty-eight hours with hardly any pause except a few hours for sleep somewhere between 1 and 5 a.m.

Gertruda found a compatriot in our hotel, a discreet and comely maiden, and with a gallant chauffeur as escort (Gertruda as usual annexed a chauffeur within twenty-four hours) they went out in the evening to see the illuminations and fireworks. Aunt Anne and I watched "life" from our balcony windows and studied the illuminations and fireworks of the emotional French temperament—a constant interest to those who love the drama.

Gertruda reported a "*himm'lische Abend*." The town like fairy land, though rather overcrowded with fairies! Everyone, however was so polite, and Monsieur

OUR
GERMAN
MAID.

Fabre, the chauffeur, had taken care of them like a— well, like a brother, only more so.

"Has this more-than-brother invited you to drive out with him in his master's automobile to-day?" enquired her mistress with deadly intuition.

Poor little Gertruda, blushing like a red, red rose, confessed he had done so. How extraordinary the gracious lady should divine it! But she had told him she did not think her mistress would consider it "convenient."

"You may go, child," said her Graciousness, "but remember I will never allow you to marry a Frenchman, or a chauffeur, so keep your susceptible little heart well locked."

"Oh, gracious lady, indeed Monsieur Fabre has in the head no idea of that sort," protested Gertruda laughing.

"Hum!" replied Aunt Anne. "Bring me my shoes, and don't forget what I say."

We were early at the market Monday morning. The garden of France excelled that summer. Dieppe had shown a rich harvest in Normandy, but it was nothing as compared with what the sun had accomplished for "la belle Touraine." Flowers and fruit were piled up in glorious array, and at prices which made the poor Northerner marvel. Peaches big as cricket balls two sous apiece. Grapes thirty centimes a pound. Pears, melons, plums all worthy of a horticultural prize. And the flowers! Oh, the flowers, they made one glad to be alive! We came away with two big cottage bouquets, gay and varied as Joseph's coat, for twenty-five centimes each!

We made great friends with one old lady whose peaches and pears, as she herself did not fail to point out, excelled all others both in size and texture.

She told us she lived up on the hill at Marmoutier, and invited us to come and see her garden and pick peaches for ourselves all hot with the sun. Her niece, a widow, who assisted her both with the garden and the stall in the market, would show us the way. A PARENT'S DUTY.

We enquired if it were her own property.

"I should well think so," laughed the old lady. "One does not plant and toil to make grow the gardens of others, my dear ladies. For my children I work that I may leave them a good property worth the double of that which my parents left to me. *Voilà.*"

"But soon your children will no doubt work for you and you will repose yourself, is it not so?" asked Aunt Anne.

"My children work for me? *Dame!* The droll idea Madame has there in the head! In France we others work always, always for the children—even when the limbs are bent and stiff with the age, the eyes are blind and the ears cease to hear. One reposes oneself only in the tomb, see you. Till then one must gain money for the children. I have two daughters and one son. I have married all and given to each a pretty *dot*. They in their turn will do the same for their children, see you."

"But do you not desire to rest sometimes?" Aunt Anne is energetic enough herself, but this picture of ceaseless toil staggered even her.

"*Ma foi!*" The old Frenchwoman shrugged her shoulders. "One takes the habit of work, my little lady. The idleness would not suit me, and all the year there is something to be done, see you. In the winter one sleeps more, to avoid spending too much on the fire and candles. But in the summer when the

THE FAIR. good God supplies the lighting and heating one must use well all the hours of the day, is it not so?" She laughed, and her old eyes twinkled shrewdly.

* * * * *

The great amusement of the day was the fair. It supplied every variety of entertainment. For those of athletic tastes there were the "merry-go-rounds." One had a varied choice in the matter of steeds, there being both pigs and geese on which to ride, an *embarras de richesse* settled by most people taking a turn on both. Then there was the *tir* for those who desired to follow *le sport*. On payment of two sous you might handle a big gun, and emit an ear-splitting crack, even if you failed to hit the target. Noise being a great feature in all fêtes, the *tir* was specially popular, even with ladies. "My faith, but one never knows," I heard one stout body laugh to her neighbour. "A day may arrive when one has the necessity to use such an instrument. It is well to practice beforehand. *Hein?*"

Each child carried a sugar stick in one hand and a musical instrument in the other, and applied them alternately to its mouth. They looked very happy, specially when towards four o'clock they were permitted to disencumber themselves of the hat which found so ill a resting place on their unaccustomed heads, and which with joy and relief was handed over to the safe keeping of the *grand'mère*.

The favourite beverage was *siròp*, and the numerous little booths for refreshments did a brisk trade in *siròp de grenadine, de citron, de groseilles*.

The wheels of fortune, performing cats, talking seals, fat ladies, three-legged twins, attracted a constant stream, while for the play of the "Belle au Bois

Dormant," given at regular intervals during the day, it was necessary to book places in advance.

THE
SLEEPING
BEAUTY.

We found an old lady in the white cap which proclaimed her from the country, gazing wistfully at the gorgeous painting outside the little temporary theatre, descriptive of the wondrous scene inside. She held a small, eager boy by the hand, while he, evidently a scholar at the *école primaire* of his village, slowly spelt out the magic words which at some time of our lives have thrilled most of us, "La Belle au Bois Dormant."

"Let us enter—we must enter," insisted the small boy. "It should be a magnificent spectacle, I tell thee."

"Without doubt it should be a magnificent spectacle, *mon petit chéri*, but it costs too much money, I tell thee. One must be prudent and not eat all the fortune in one day. See how much thou hast expended already."

"But this is worth more than all, I tell thee. Oh, I pray thee, *Grand'mère*, refuse not."

Aunt Anne was listening attentively. A look in her eyes told me she was thinking of a certain small person clothed in purple (or blue, strictly speaking) and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day, whose pleading with her grandparent had never yet been in vain.

"I can see you are going to take the boy, so I shall take the old lady," I said.

"I do wish you would not be continually snapping the ideas out of my very mouth, my dear Felicity," said Aunt Anne irritably. Then sweetly to the old one of the white cap—

"Madame, if it would interest you and your little boy here to see the spectacle I should be greatly honoured if you would accept two seats which I have

POLITESSE
DU CŒUR.

to spare. My young friend and I also desire to see this interesting play."

"Ah, but no, but no! Madame is too amiable. Never could I accept such a bounty—impossible. But thousand thanks all the same to Madame. For the rest we must begoing in a few moments, for the little one becomes fatigued."

But here the "little one" interposed. He had been pulling vigorously at his grandmother's sleeve during her speech, with which it was clear he was quite out of sympathy. At the last remark he could hold his peace no longer.

"*Grand'mère*, it is an error to suppose I am fatigued—altogether an error," he remarked in excellent French, and with a manner both polite and dignified. It was curious to note the really educated language of all the peasant children, even when speaking to one another, and their pretty, courteous manners if we addressed them. Two tiny boys to whom I gave sous to buy sweets returned and offered me their purchases to "taste."

Leaving Aunt Anne to settle with the old lady and persuade her, as I knew she soon would, that the favour was on her side in granting us the pleasure of her society, I went off to secure four front seats.

It turned out to be simple truth that two more enthusiastic, delightful companions we could not have found. As the plot thickened and villainy prospered, the boy was unable to keep silence. "*Dieu, quel malheur!*" in tones of despair. "*Ha, l'animal! tête de veau,*" in fierce contempt, or "*à la bonne heure*" when things took a better turn. Our actors threw themselves with fiery earnestness into their parts, the wicked Queen and her accomplice exciting yells of

execration from the sympathetic audience. The play gained little help from its setting, the costumes being of the crudest and apparently made for the company in days when they were young and slim—days long past. But we never lost a word, and the gestures and by-play would have told the story even without speech.

AN
ANTIQUÉ
"BELLE."

Our old lady showed herself shrewdly critical both of the actors and the play, in spite of the emotion and exhilaration consequent on such a novel experience, for she confessed to us it was forty years since she had been to the real theatre such as this! The comedy one played on that occasion had been very moving—several assassinations had taken place, and there had been a burial of a young girl on the stage. I suggested Ophelia, but my old friend looked blank till I said "Hamlet," when her face lit up with sudden remembrance. "But yes, but yes—behold the name 'Amelet,' 'Amelet' it was."

She found the "Belle" played well and showed talent, but lacked distinction, was in fact not *comme il faut*. It was plain that her cheeks were rouged and her eyes blackened—such young girls finished badly and rarely found a husband. Real princesses were not like that—she had seen two of them once at the Château at Amboise which belongs to the Duc d'Orléans—nothing could be more unlike the beautiful Duchesse d'Aoste, for instance, than this theatre princess! The "Belle" was certainly fifty and not only wife of the manager but mother of the hero prince and most of his suite.

The scene in the wood appealed strongly to our old lady.

"In the forest I am *chez moi*," she said. "It does not astonish me that one represents things

JEAN
BAPTISTE'S
HOME.

marvellous in the forest. In the great solitude of the woods strange impressions come. Sometimes it is so silent one may hear the moss growing. And then another time there are voices everywhere around, though no one is there but you alone—no one you can see," she added in a low, mysterious tone.

Between the acts we learnt that she lived at Montlouis, in one of the quaint rock-houses on the side of the hill overhanging the banks of the Loire. Being on the high road to Amboise and Chenonceau we should be sure to pass it one day, and must come and see her. It was her married daughter Céline, the mother of Jean Baptiste, who had sent the money for the fête, insisting on this use for it in spite of all remonstrance. Céline was cook with Monsieur le Colonel here in Tours. Ah, but she was a *cordons bleu* that one, so said Madame la Colonelle, and she gained with them her sixty francs a month. The father of Jean Baptiste, he also gained money as valet to Monsieur le Marquis, elder brother of Monsieur le Colonel. He was a good boy, well ranged and prudent, the husband of Céline. God be thanked for that! Husbands were chancy things; it was easy to fall badly, and get one who eat up all your gainings besides his own, above all in a bad city like Paris. Oh, Paris was gay and seductive, but one had recounted to her how wicked it was over there! Madame la Colonelle had given Céline half the day out and had invited Jean Baptiste and his grandmother to *déjeuner* at her house. Later they were to return there and eat again before taking the train back to Montlouis.

A never-to-be-forgotten day, this fête! With a visit to the Hotel de Ville, the Cathedral and the Fair, above all now that the "Belle au Bois Dormant" had

been also added in a manner little short of providential, to the day's programme. LE "FIVE O'CLOCK."

We exchanged names and addresses while drinking "le five o'clock," as the *confiserie* window announced it, in the Rue Nationale. At the theatre door we had found ourselves reluctant to part, and had, therefore, insisted on the friendship being cemented in a cup of good English tea. So we mounted a fiacre, and with Jean Baptiste to his joy perched up on the box, drove to what our cocher assured us to be the confectioner "the most *chic* in all Tours," patronised not only by the *beau monde* of the town, but also the *haute noblesse* of the country round.

From our tea-table in the window of Madame Bignon's we watched the stream of people pass, our two guests of the rocks conversing with the pleasant ease and dignity which well-bred people of the world are apt to think their sole monopoly. The grandmother was a typical Tourangelle, with her finely cut features, dark, expressive eyes and erect, dignified old figure. One sees such types in the Italian cinquecento pictures. There is a "St. Anne" at Florence for which our old friend might well have sat.

Madame Bignon paid us marked attention in spite of her numerous customers, and we did full justice to her excellent "five-o'clock," with *galettes*, *éclairs*, and *madeleines*.

There were white coifs at several tables, near us two handsome country girls, with a fashionable town cousin, whose terrible green plush hat was the subject of their open admiration and envy. The town cousin offered no word of praise in return to the exquisite fine muslin caps—she complacently accepted the homage due to the "last cry" of fashion.

COUNTRY
NEIGH-
BOURS.

Madame Bignon, seeing we were interested, pointed out her distinguished clients as they alighted in motors and carriages to order *plats doux* for the coming parties of "the hunt," wedding, and other receptions. She gave us a little sketch of each one's private history; we knew all about them—marriages, divorces, incomes, toilettes—by our second cup of tea.

"In Tours," laughed Madame Bignon, "all the world knows the affairs of his neighbour better than himself or even *le bon Dieu*."

"Ah yes," agreed Madame Charbonneau, "it is so also with us at Montlouis. They know the inside of your pocket and the contents of your *pot au feu* even when it is empty."

"Well, there is one thing none of them know," said Aunt Anne, "and that is how to embroider their caps as finely as yours. When I go home I shall wear a cap like that. It is dignified, it is beautiful, it is practical."

"It pleases Madame, my old cap of a peasant?" laughed Madame Charbonneau. "It is true the work is fine," she added with a touch of pride; "I made it for my marriage day—the eyes were young and the heart also, then!"

"The heart and the eyes and the cap have worn equally well," Aunt Anne assured her. "You and I are both younger than most of the young people at five-and-twenty."

"Ah, Madame, never shall I forget this *Jour de Fête*," said our old friend as we bade each other *adieu* and *au revoir*. "'The Belle au Bois Dormant,' the English tea and the ladies who have been for Jean Baptiste and for me as the good fairies in the play; for ever this will remain with me, a Golden Day."

A ROCK-HOUSE, FARM-HOUSE AND QUEEN'S HOUSE.

FROM many-towered Tours to the royal Château of Chenonceau is one of the loveliest drives in Touraine, one road leading along the banks of the Loire and the other of the Cher. There were chateaux perched on every hill and nestling in every green copse. Touraine is the country of châteaux. The term covers a wild field—from the royal palaces of Blois, Amboise, or Chambord to the small provincial country house, all are châteaux. But whether applied to the royal palace or the little turreted white house to be seen on every hillside, with its green shutters and green background of trees, the name conveys a dainty charm and a distinction all its own. The château is seldom situated in the wide green park and spacious setting of the English castle or manor. Two-thirds of the land in France belong to the people now, and few men devote miles of precious mother earth purely to decorative and ornate purposes, while thousands of their fellow countrymen, those too who live by tilling the soil, possess not a rood. The majority of French peasants are proprietors, and the château is often only set in its own lovely garden of grass parterres, terraces and borders of bright flowers. Sometimes a few acres of woodland are reserved for the *chasse à tir* or a little stag hunting, but nearly all forests belong now to the Government and the hunting of deer, wild boar, etc., is

THE
CHÂTEAU.

COUNTRY
LIFE.

rented by the year. Even historical châteaux such as Amboise, Azay le Rideau, Chenonceau and Langeais have no large parks or ground around them, only their little woods, lawns and water. Yet the idea of real country life is generally well carried out in the French château, great or small.

I may have had an exceptional experience in both countries, but I confess I found country life in France less formal and less dull than in England. We lived more out of doors, though we took, perhaps, less exercise. Instead of full evening dress every night, and dining in an artificially lighted room at eight o'clock or half-past on fine summer evenings, when we were a small party we often dined in the garden or on the terrace. No doubt the climate has something to do with it, but apart from that the tastes of the two nations differ fundamentally, and this informal *al fresco* dinner, like the open-air cafés on the Paris boulevards, would be condemned as uncomfortable "foreign fashion" by most right-thinking Britons.

The sitting rooms of the château are generally *en suite*, and the life is one of constant friendly intercourse. Men and women leave the dining room together, smoke and chat together, instead of passing half the evening in separate rooms. As the doors are generally open, everyone passes to and fro at will. Each room in England, even where built *en suite*, carefully closes the door on its neighbour. The host in his sanctum; the hostess in her sitting-room; the men guests in the smoking or billiard room; the women in the drawing-room (or supposed to be)—each as in a fortress.

"The King was in his counting-house counting out his money,
The Queen was in her parlour eating bread and honey."

It is not to be denied that the English mode of living has advantages, when one's spirit is inclined for solitude or a *tête-à-tête*, but the French life is far more sociable, and it is difficult to get off alone in a French country house, either to "count out your money" or "eat bread and honey," when once the social day and life of the community has commenced, which it does when all assemble for the mid-day *déjeuner*. Thank heaven, one is spared the trying test to nerves, digestion and temper of the English early breakfast. How few of us, especially among the men, are able to show "a glorious morning face" at 9.30 or even 10 a.m., but at 12 or 12.30 it is comparatively easy. You have had a quiet and light repast in the comfort of your own room, read your letters and paper in peace, been for a stroll round the garden, met perhaps a congenial companion, but had no severe call upon your conversational powers. The consequence is you are in tolerant, perhaps even social mood, by mid-day.

EARLY
BREAK-
FASTS.

In face of the English breakfast even Aunt Anne's patriotism breaks down.

All along the Loire were pretty country houses, surrounded by thickly wooded lands, and covers where game of all sorts abounds. The stag and the wild boar are hunted with hounds, while for the *chasse à tir* there are roebucks, and pheasants, and on the "plain" partridges. Notices were continual to the effect that traps were laid in these preserved lands. One there was to "Beware of the wolf," which brought our hearts to a standstill. But our driver explained it was only "to cause fear to the poacher," wolves being really exceedingly rare, not one seen in three years. The French poacher is clearly taken to be a simple-minded person, and the wolf a friend to the game preserver.

A ROCK-
HOUSE.

Montlouis is perched on the rocky hillside overlooking the Loire. In spite of its railway station and post-office and *école primaire*, it has retained an old-world picturesqueness, clustering, as it does, round the little high-steepled church and climbing up the steep cliff. Many of the dwellings on the outskirts are formed out of the caves in the hillside.

Leaving the carriage in the road, we mounted a little zig-zag pathway. As we ascended, doors, windows and chimneys peeped out of the rocks between the growth of overhanging trees and shrubs, the quaint cave-houses sometimes built one above the other.

We soon discovered the home of our friend Madame Charbonneau, for she was sitting in the sunny doorway of her rock-house knitting, a big grey cat curled up at her feet. At the sight of us her old face shone with welcome, and she bade us "Enter, enter, enter."

It was a dark, mysterious abode till our eyes grew accustomed to the twilight; then gradually ghostly shapes took on the familiar forms of a big bed, a tall linen press, while a row of shining monster eyes became well-polished copper pans, a giant's head turned into a huge pumpkin on a shelf, and weird bats and birds resolved themselves into strings of vegetables suspended from the ceiling.

A second room made itself visible beyond, a darker room, deeper in the mountain side, lighted only by the window and door from the front. This was the sleeping room, though there was a bed also in the kitchen. Above an ancient *prie-dieu* by the bedside hung a crucifix and two photographs, one of a tomb, and one of a bridal party.

Jean Baptiste was at his *école primaire* receiving

a fine modern education, very different from that given to his parents a few years ago by the good, simple-minded nuns in the same building.

THE
ANGER
OF THE
LOIRE.

The "old one" also was absent, alas, for he counted greatly to have seen and thanked the English ladies who had made so much happiness for his old wife and the boy. But there, what would you; the trees had to be cut down in the forest, and one must not refuse work even at thirty sous a day, with the winter advancing and the rent to be paid.

Mme. Charbonneau was not in the happy position of a proprietor. She and her husband had known a hard life and bad days. They paid rent for their rock-house, sixty francs a year, a high rent considering their income, and the limitations of the rock.

One advantage, however, they had beside that of picturesqueness, being situated, as our old friend pointed out, high enough to escape the great floods; those terrible, but fortunately rare, occasions when the beneficent Loire, who is usually as a loving mother to her children of Touraine, suddenly becomes an angry, implacable goddess, sweeping her destroying waters in a mighty torrent over all the land, carrying away whole villages and farms in her course, only those lifted well above the plain having any chance of escape. "When she enrages herself she is very cruel, our Loire." Madame Charbonneau, like all the country people, attributed the same personality to the Loire as an Alaskan gives to the Yukon, or our Breton friends to their sea. Ah, but the last flood had been terrible! It was many years before the land could smile again. Standing up here, one appeared to look out over a seething ocean, an ocean covered with floating wrecks, not only houses, farm-buildings and

BENEDIC-
TION OF
ORCHARD
AND VINE-
YARD.

cattle, but bodies of men, women and little children, being swept past on the flood. Below, in the road to Amboise, was to be seen a tall cross, bearing the name of a brave young soldier who had given his life in the work of rescue. Before he was himself swept away by the strong current he saved many, among others the two young brothers of Madame Charbonneau herself.

Our hostess took from the shelf a large basket filled with peaches. "They are but the *pêches de vigne*," she said, "but well ripened and sweet. I beg these ladies will make me the pleasure to accept them."

We remonstrated at the idea of taking such a quantity.

"Ah, they please you not," she said, her face falling.

"But on the contrary they please us so much we would not make the *gourmandes* and take all," we assured her.

But Mme. Charbonneau insisted that this year there was abundance for all—grapes, peaches, pears, plums weighed down the branches till they touched the ground

"Last autumn many crosses were placed in the vineyards and orchards. The Holy Virgin has blessed the fruit," said the old woman simply. "These peaches are from the vineyard of my cousin, adjoining the farm down there. I made her washing yesterday, and as payment received some red wine and these peaches in the hope that my ladies would visit me one of these days!"

She then produced a bottle and two tiny glasses. The wine was so sour it brought tears to our eyes, but we drunk it with heroism, thanking heaven the glasses were no bigger.

The large bed in the kitchen, Madame Charbonneau explained to us, was for guests. Sometimes the father and sometimes the mother of the little Jean Baptiste made them a visit. "The little one himself," she said "sleeps on the coffer here—with a mattress of dried leaves fresh and sweet each year from the forest, and a quilt of the goosedown, he is very well I promise you. It is so we other poor must arrange, see you, *mesdames* ? But my daughter at the colonel's has a magnificent sleeping room for herself alone, with a toilet table and a mirror and a washing table fitted with porcelain, and a carpet on the floor—even as if she were Madame la Colonelle. One had no such luxuries when I was a girl and served at the château of Monsieur le Marquis near Amboise.

A BED OF
AUTUMN
LEAVES.

It appeared, however, Céline was in no way spoilt by her luxurious living, for she spent all her holidays in the rock house, her whole heart being wrapped up in the boy.

We were keenly interested in the leaf mattress and covers of goosedown. We had a minute account of how they were made; on the sunny days of autumn the leaves being gathered in the forest and spread out to dry till they were crisp and sweet as hay. Every year there is a thorough washing and renewing of all the bedding. Aunt Anne determined then and there to start leaf mattresses in every country village in England. She was so keen about it I had not the heart to remind her of damp autumn leaves decaying under dripping branches with a leaden sky overhead, autumn mists enfolding the land as with a mantle.

Before we left, Aunt Anne, much to our old friend's diversion, insisted on trying-on the white cap she had so admired the day of the fête. There were several

MADAME
CHARBON-
NEAU'S
COIF.

equally beautiful caps carefully wrapped in paper and stowed away in the big linen press. Our laughter at her transformation drew other white *bonnets* out of neighbouring doors, and when I posed the new Tourangelle in Madame Charbonneau's doorway and took snap-shots at her with my kodak, I found a rapidly increasing audience behind me. Aunt Anne declared that never in her life had she felt a more reposeful head-dress, whether it was becoming she had no means of judging for the rock-house boasted no such superfluous vanity as a looking-glass, but the sober dignity, spotless cleanliness and delightful absence of all weight convinced her she had found the ideal covering for what she described as her "poor old attic."

Leaving Madame Charbonneau still rocking with laughter and protesting against the golden louis left in exchange, Aunt Anne descended the narrow path to the carriage triumphantly coifed *en paysanne* there to be greeted with bewildered acclaims by Gertruda demurely seated on the box with the driver. "Dear heaven, but what would say the gracious lady's honoured Mr. Colonel son and Her Transparency Mrs. Colonel daughter-in-law could they see her so driving in the fresh air!" Gertruda always gave the German rendering for English rank, a process by which the rank became gloriously magnified.

"Thou wilt make me three more caps exactly like this one, child, so note well the pattern," answered her mistress as we drove off waving a last farewell to the rock-house above.

Passing a very attractive looking farmhouse we determined to enquire whether *pensionnaires* were taken in, or rooms to be had for the summer.

It was somewhat difficult to find the entrance, for the stately front door was evidently not accustomed to be opened, and no sign of life showed from the front windows, the green shutters of which were all closed. We began to doubt the house being inhabited except by an angry dog, but walked round boldly following the direction of the bark. A door at the back giving on to a very dirty *basse cour* opened straight into a still dirtier and more disorderly kitchen. Here we found an aged crone who invited us to enter. Stepping over the cocks and hens, ducks, geese, and feathered fowl in the doorway, and giving a wide berth to the ferocious dog straining at his chain, we entered holding high our skirts.

A LAND-
OWNER.

Viewed from the outside, this farm-house had the air of a small well-kept *château*; inside, it only needed a pig to have been of the party, to complete the resemblance to an Irish cabin. Instead of the pig, however, was a tall lazy-looking young man, introduced as the grandson.

We made known our business.

"Yes, there were rooms to be let," said the old lady, who reigned supreme as *madame la propriétaire*, but the tenants must make their own *cuisine* and their own service. She had a malady of the heart and could no longer make any service, she had enough to do feeding the beasts and her grandson there! Clearly a servant was unknown in the establishment.

"Other time she made well the *cuisine*," struck in the grandson with evident admiration for the old lady.

He took us upstairs at his grandmother's desire to see a suite of four rooms which would be at our disposal. Half the house he told us was occupied by his

JOYS OF
A FARM-
HOUSE.

mother, a widow, who with two step-children, made a separate *ménage*. He himself lived with the grandmother, taking life easy and basking in her, I should judge, somewhat intermittent favour.

The rooms he showed us were large, bare and comfortless. A lack of cleanliness and fresh air was conspicuous everywhere. In other rooms through which we passed not a window was open nor a bed made, though it was midday.

We began to feel doubtful about the joys of a French farm-house. In the kitchen one pot on an oil stove contained the *déjeuner* of which the two were partaking standing; no table was laid, they used as little ceremony as the chickens pecking up their meal in the doorway. Yet the old lady is a wealthy proprietor, her grandson told us, owning, besides a large farm, all the vineyards for acres round. He pointed out also three great presses upstairs well-stocked with fine linen of which his grandmother was justly proud, though they, like the front door, were apparently rarely opened; for she demurred about supplying us, as tenants, with sheets and towels, saying the last people brought their own.

By the time we had finished our tour of inspection all desire to become this old lady's tenants had vanished. No doubt further search would have discovered a farm-house more in harmony with one's ideal of sweet cleanly country life, but this house with its white walls and green shutters had looked so spotless from the outside one felt doubtful of trying others whose exterior was less promising.

We returned to the kitchen and talked some time with the old lady, disserting upon the up-bringing of calves, one having arrived the day before. (From

a hole in the kitchen wall one could see into the cow-shed, and though, as the owner pointed out, this was most convenient for watching over the new arrival, it contributed towards the complex odours of that kitchen.

FRENCH
TAXES.

For several generations her family had lived on this land, said the old lady, but no one had left it as prosperous as she would. Not only had she added many acres to those her father bequeathed her, but she had renewed the orchard and planted better vines. The wine now brought in twice as much as in his time. Her son was dead, she was thankful he had left but one son and that she herself had no other children, for to divide the property would have torn her heart. "In France the law," she said, "obliges you to leave all equally divided among sons and daughters. You cannot even will to one your vineyards and to another your house and farm. Each must share in everything—very tiresome that!"

Oh, there was much room for improvement in French law! Two things of special annoyance were the taxes on windows and on wheels. "I have blocked up four windows on this side of the house, but those rooms which I let in the summer, to them I am obliged to leave the windows," she remarked regretfully. "As for the wheels, my grandson he keeps the *charrette* with two, for that is needed in the vineyards and for the market, but the carriage with four wheels which my husband had the extravagance to purchase, that I use no more." And true enough when she showed us round her *basse cour* there in an out-house lay the old carriage with its four taxable wheels piled up in the corner.

"For seventeen years it has paid no tax that one,"

EXAGGE-
RATED
ECONOMY.

chuckled the old lady with satisfaction. "Money saved is money earned," was the principle on which she had grown rich.

It was evident she spent little on her clothes which were exactly like those of the poorest peasant, with many a careful patch in the well-worn dark stuff gown, her white *bonnet* even plainer than the workaday one of Madame Charbonneau.

The new coif excited her curiosity. "It is for an eccentricity Madame wears that?" she enquired.

Aunt Anne repudiated the idea, pointing out not only the exceeding beauty of her new acquisition but the manifest advantages of such a head-dress.

"*Pfui!*" said the economical old body disdainfully. "For one such you might buy two dozen of those I have on the head, and mine will wash more easily and endure besides ten years longer, though worn every day in the week. Embroidery! Bah, give me what is practical!"

I could not help wondering how she would have viewed some of the Englishwomen's headpieces. The battered jaunty sailor hat of the charwoman, the wondrous befeathered erection of the factory girl, and worse still in her eyes, the fashionable creation of the prosperous farmer's wife.

Autres pays autres mœurs. The wife or daughter of an English proprietor of a large farm such as this, would have had at least three servants, emulated in her dress, furniture and equipage the lady of the manor, played the piano and read Mudie's latest novel, and ignored all knowledge of the farm as completely as if she lived in Park Lane. Whereas the Frenchwoman not only kept the accounts, but milked the cows, fed the ducks, and superintended the birth of

the calf, her ambition being to improve the property for her children, and leave them more than she received. "Work for the children." "Save for the children," is her motto, and the satisfaction she gets out of that achievement, more than compensates her for toiling and moiling without ceasing all her days. It seems a pity that a *juste milieu* cannot be struck between the two.

DEVOTION
OF
PARENTS.

On returning to our carriage I exchanged seats with Gertruda, and, mounting the box, talked to our driver, a charming old fellow with the air and manners of a marquis of the *ancien régime*.

The box-seat is the right place for viewing the country. All the lovely smiling land lay spread out before me, glowing with autumn wealth of fruit and glory of colour.

Autumn in England, however beautiful, always strikes a note of sadness. It is a season of melancholy, of farewell and dying. The birds forsake us, the sun forsakes us, the autumn flowers are strewn with falling leaves, and wet with tearful rain. Even the harvest is a time far more often of anxiety and disappointment than of rejoicing. The barn-dances and harvest-home suppers of the olden days exist no more. Who has any heart for gaiety in an English village? What social life does the villager enjoy? Gertruda tells me that even in her cold north German village they have *sing-verains*, *kaffé-klatsches*, and weekly dances in the winter time and they keep Christmas and the feasts, weddings, and christenings by dancing and song. "*Ach*, in England it is very tedious the life of the villages," pronounces Gertruda.

In Touraine one felt the real meaning of autumn, the full significance of the story of Proserpine.

A GOLDEN
AUTUMN.

There was no suggestion of dying but rather the rich fulfilment of the promise of spring, of the bloom of summer. Everywhere a joyous gathering in and garnering up of the ripe fruits of the earth, while new seeds were laid in the freshly up-turned soil, there to grow in secret till ready for birth in the spring.

In every orchard we saw groups of laughing girls filling great baskets with the falling apples, walnuts and plums which the men shook from the trees. Such fruit trees! A golden apple or purple plum to every leaf, like the glorious impossible fruit trees of the Primitives.

In the vineyards too the first ripe grapes were being picked; and in one village, instead of the usual wooden crusher with which the grapes are generally pressed down as the barrels are filled and carried away in the waiting carts, they were treading the wine-press in Biblical fashion, dancing on the grapes with bare feet, while a piper piped a gay measure.

The barns were already full of golden grain, and fine fortresses of hay, showing a thousand rainbow tints enwoven with the grass, stood solidly by the barns in the pasture lands.

We drove through one prosperous village after another. There were no poor in Touraine, said our *cocher*, it was not permitted. "The vagrant, the beggar, the Bohemian (gipsy), one chases him at once. Each village looks after its own poor, for, of course, it happens sometimes through sickness or old age that nothing remains. Well, for such cases the community provides, and there is a *dépôt* in every village where bread, wine and fuel are given to those who apply."

Nearly everyone owns land and house. They work for themselves, their feet stand firm on their own soil,

and the position of proprietor, when the peasant does hire himself out for work to a richer neighbour, or to the government, places the service on a totally different basis to that of the man who can be turned out of his home at a week's notice by his employer.

THE
OTHER
SIDE OF
THE
SHIELD.

As we drove on through the vineyards which make the riches of Touraine, some lovely purple grapes tempted me to descend from my box-seat and pick a bunch warm with the sun, and my conscience prompted me to leave a little pile of sous under the leaves, the market price for three times what I stole, our driver assured me. That grapes can grow for miles by the open roadside and no one ever dream of stealing them is an extraordinary proof of the fact not that the standard of morality is unusually high, but that the desperately poor are unknown in this favoured land.

There are two sides to every shield however, and one glance we had at the reverse side of this fair showing shield. We noticed everywhere a curious dearth of children. It seemed as though a Pied Piper had passed through the land. In one village where we stopped to buy grapes (they were not half so sweet as those I stole) from a woman walking in her vineyard, we saw at last a child, the first child for miles around; but even this solitary infant we learnt was not a native of Touraine but a *nourrisson* from Paris, sent to gain health in the country. The woman agreed, though without regret, that children were a rare commodity. Her married son had one, her daughter had limited her family to two, and so it was everywhere, at the most you found two children in a family. Why? "*Dame!* see you," one says, "we must live a little for ourselves as well as the children. With the large families they eat all, and

IN THE
FOOT-
STEPS OF
DIANE.

then arrives poverty and annoyance and nothing to leave when you die."

Here again one regrets that a *juste milieu* could not be found between the baker's dozen of the English working class, too often ill-fed and ill-clothed by a worn-out sickly mother, and the solitary little heir of the prosperous peasant proprietor of Touraine. One missed the voices of the children in the villages as in the forests the notes of the birds; for though there does exist a law to protect the wild birds between January and September, it is more honoured in the breach than the observance, and they are taken *au lacet* and *au filet*, and are shot at with impunity by *chasseurs* big and little, who may blaze away all over the place, except where *chasse garde* is written up.

Chenonceau at last! A sweet little old-fashioned village, surrounded by the great forest of Amboise. We lunched at the little inn on an *omelette* and *filet* fit for a king, and then walked down the long, straight avenue to the château where Diane de Poitiers reigned as Queen of Venus' Court in undisputed, unblushing triumph, till that dark day which brought the news of the death of her lord Henri II. Then swiftly descended retribution in the form of the Queen. Like all her family Catherine knew the secret of waiting. Cat-like she sprang as soon as the "good moment" had arrived. Alighting promptly on stately Chenonceau she chased the fair Diane and took possession of the attractive spot herself. No one can wonder that Catherine thought the place much too good for such as Diane. It was always a princely residence, and Catherine added to its beauty and grandeur by building on till the castle formed a complete bridge spanning the river Cher from one bank to the other.

Time, and all the destructive foes he brings in his train—revolutions, Huguenot insurrections and family feuds—have spared Chenonceaux, even to the ancient tower of its first owner, Catherine Briconnet. Fair and stately it stands as in the days of the second Catherine, in a setting of green woods and bright *parterres* of flowers laid out in the wide terraces of Diana's Italian garden. The arches and turrets reflected in the clear waters reveal a second château, and here no doubt the spirits of the former owners disport themselves in freedom, unmolested by the modern upstarts who have dared usurp the more solid walls. For the old times have passed over, and if the shades of the kingly Louis XII., or the magnificent decorative François I^{er}, and their royal successors, ever happen to glide through the ancient doorway they must shiver as they perceive in that stately entrance hall the bourgeois hat-rack of the American millionaire; while twice a week they would come in painful contact with a troupe of tourists standing closely packed on a narrow strip of drugget, lest their boots should damage the newly renovated floor.

NEW MEN
AND OLD
ACRES.

Alas that we should have belonged to this undistinguished company! The mind of the guide was so absorbed in the endeavour to keep us all within the almost impossible limits of the drugget, that her historical information reached us in somewhat chaotic form. The Louis XII. mantel-piece with its hedgehogs and Anne's festooned cord, François I^{er}'s bed and rampant salamanders, and the American's renovations, were wedged in between frantic directions not to step on the parquet floor, to keep in line, and to follow closely on the heels of each other, which we did like sheep.

A RO-
MANTIC
BOUR-
GEOIS.

Aunt Anne exchanged views in an undertone with a stout gentleman to whom these directions were particularly trying. "For how to do when you do not see your boots," said he; "it is not reasonable."

"You must be a second Blondin to succeed as you do, my dear Monsieur," said Aunt Anne with her usual ready sympathy. His thirst for information was quenched by the irascible custodian, and Aunt Anne endeavoured to straighten out for him the salamanders, hedgehogs, ermine, etc., which he had sadly mixed. Gradually they managed to lag behind, and evading the lynx eye of the guide, to drop out of the *queue* altogether. It was not till we were in the middle of the long gallery built by Catherine over the arches which form the bridge across the river, that I missed them. My duty as chaperon demanded that I should see what my charge was doing. Watching my opportunity I also gave the argus-eyed one the slip, not difficult, as I was entirely hidden behind the ample folds of a large German Frau. I found Aunt Anne and her Blondin gazing out on the river, far too absorbed in conversation to take any notice of me.

"What memories of romance these waters reflect," the Frenchman was saying in emotional tones; "think Madame of those seductive ladies in their toilettes of gauze and brocade, so elegant, so dazzling! Like nymphs they floated on this river by the light of the moon, the King and his Diane, those gallant cavaliers and fair ladies of the Court. One feels oneself intoxicated even to think of it!"

Aunt Anne put up her long tortoiseshell lorgnettes and looked at him quizzically.

"But it is well to be prudent on moonlight nights

when one is wedded to a Catherine, who awaits one in Paris. Eh, Monsieur?"

CATHERINE
IN PARIS.

"Ah, Madame has reason—one would try without doubt to remember her; but figure to yourself how soft, how tender the melodious music would be in that gilded hall. One would dance the sarabande, the minuet. On this river one would glide in a little boat for two alone. You would sing to the *belle dame* sweet songs with the guitar as the boat glided beneath the trees. Ah, Madame, but *you*, I feel it, know well how the emotion would gain one. My faith, but they amused themselves well those kings and courtiers, they knew how to live!" The stout gentleman cast a sentimental eye on Aunt Anne and sighed profoundly, doubtless remembering his "Catherine" at home.

"You have a poet's imagination, Monsieur, and evidently much heart. Pardon me if I say that in a censorious world both these gifts are apt to be a great danger to their owner."

Nothing could have been more discouraging to romance than Aunt Anne's tone, yet he replied:

"It is true, Madame. You have truly divined my temperament—that which few persons have been able to do. You possess not only the sympathy but the insight."

What more he would have added must remain for ever unknown. He had evidently quite forgotten "Catherine" in Paris, but at this point the chaperon considered things had gone far enough.

"Steady, my Aunt," said a stern voice at her side. "You seem to have made considerable way at this window—a dangerous vicinity." Taking her arm I drew her away, while Blondin, as we moved on, related

THE "C"
AND "D."

to us other interesting historical châteaux connected with the great and terrible Catherine.

Aunt Anne capped all his stories by telling him of the monogram in the royal bedchamber at Blois.

Blondin was enchanted, though he had visited the Chateau of Blois he had failed to notice this interesting witness to the very human side sometimes revealed by the Kings of the earth. "Ah, the cunning one that he was, Henri Deux! Imagine that he should introduce the fair Diane in the same moment that he makes a compliment to his wife. *Epatant!* Draw, I beg you, the little design for me on your carte de visite dear Madame," he begged.

And as Aunt Anne amiably complied, he pointed out with eager enthusiasm how the D depended for its very being on the left side of the H, namely the heart, while the independent C stood alone. "How poetical, how symbolic," cried Blondin. "What a poem might be composed on the subject!"

"*Tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse,*" remarked Aunt Anne, dryly, checking with a sudden cold douche the emotional ardour of Blondin: "Henri, Diane, Catherine, all are gone, and the American millionaire reigns in their stead. How long will his good moment last—who shall say!"

"Ah, Madame, prolong I pray you the good moment for me," said Blondin, as, having now completed the tour, we were going into the grounds. "Permit that I accompany you, ladies, for a little promenade in the gardens."

Oblivious of my significant and dissenting cough, Aunt Anne graciously assented.

As we proceeded through the Italian garden of the Diane to the shady little wood beyond, the stout

gentleman confided to us that his career as a notary had been so successful, he hoped before long to be the owner of an ancient château, equal perhaps to Chenonceau. He had his eye on one, in fact—mortgaged past hope for the owner. "Why not?" as Aunt Anne instinctively gave an exclamation of dissent; "it was the notaries now who were stepping into all the finest châteaux, and an excellent investment too. Look at Azay le Rideau, the notary there sold the books and pictures for more than he paid for the place!"

A DE-
SPOILER
OF
CHÂTEAUX.

"The wretch!" gasped Aunt Anne, but in English, so it escaped the notary, whose perceptions were not alive to anything but the very obvious.

Beautiful Azay! It was too true. We had rushed to the picture gallery to see the famous portraits, the Marie Stuart, the Francois I^{er}, the Catherine, which for years had looked down from those walls, shedding over this stately home the light of their gracious time-honoured presence, and found all gone, as also the rare old books and engravings, once the pride of Azay. We had come across some of the latter since in an old book shop at Tours. Poor, beautiful, despoiled Azay, like Niobe she stands bathed in tearful waters, mourning for the children torn from her embrace.

In vain did Blondin endeavour to ingratiate himself after the announcement of these sentiments. Aunt Anne's sympathy was effectually frozen. She became frigid, and I myself was forced to contribute a few remarks in order to cover the chill of her monosyllables.

The notary, however, was singularly obtuse, as I have said, and it was with unruffled complacency that

AUNT
ANNE
FRIGID.

he insisted on seeing us into our carriage and thanked us for our so charming society and conversation.

"Never shall I forget this visit to Chenonceau," he said to Aunt Anne; "and the initials at Blois, are they not symbolic of life, the 'C' and the 'D' which hold a man always?"

But Aunt Anne made no response save a distant bow as we drove off.

"Imagine that individual strutting about as owner in the home of a King of France," she shuddered. "This is the last historic château I desire to visit—it makes me quite ill!"

DUNGEONS AND DARK DEEDS.

LOCHES is a place to visit but not to dwell in.

A CAGED
EAGLE.

We saw it bathed in sunlight, the glowing, mellow sunshine of an autumn day in Touraine, yet the impression left is all grey and grim, with an odour of dead men's bones, murder and sin.

The old town with its narrow twisting streets climbs to the foot of the dominating château with old-fashioned subservience, showing forth still the feudal spirit of the middle ages. The great wooden gates still swing on the same massive iron hinges as when they opened to admit Louis XI. with his victim, Cardinal Jean Balue, glaring out from between the bars of his big cage like some imprisoned eagle. Cardinal Balue, unearthed from his cellar at Plessis le Tour, where, Heaven knows, life had not been gay, to be carried to Loches and there suspended in a cage from the church tower, a salutary warning to those who crossed the will of the vicious tyrant. Not for weeks or months did he so hang, but for long years, in which time ceased to exist, yet not the man, for his unconquerable spirit endured and came through even this ordeal. The victims of Louis XI. were not generally fashioned of such stern stuff. The very air seems full of their death groans and curses; and who knows but in truth it is, if, as some hold, the atmosphere retains the impressions thrown on it by vivid human emotions, Loches having been for many years the headquarters

PRIEST
AND
PENITENT.

of Louis and his abettor and instigator, that choice spirit, Tristan L'Hermite, whose house still stands at Tours.

The gruesomest spot in Loches—and there is a fine variety in dungeons, cells and towers—is the small private oratory of Louis XI. Needless to say it is built underground, shut away from the air and light of heaven, and reached by a narrow, tortuous flight of steps striking at once the note of their designer's character and methods. It is curious to stand before the little altar and think of what strange stuff his prayers must have been made.

Close to the altar is a small alcove in the wall, about the size of a fireplace, in which for four years he screwed up a priest to whom he came with pious regularity and confessed his sins. At the end of this time, according to our guide, who took a grim delight in rehearsing his hero's atrocities, the king considered the priest had absorbed about as much as he could hold, so this most Christian monarch and Catholic Majesty bricked up his father-confessor alive in his hole, together with the heavy load of secrets he held.

In another corner of this sacred edifice was found a small secret passage, also walled up, and beneath the floor sixteen skulls and skeleton bones to match. Each skull showed a hatchet stroke, sufficient to stun though not to kill, our guide assured us. He took the skulls from a basket where they lay heaped up in a corner of the chapel. One by one he handled them with the callous familiarity of Hamlet's gravedigger. Aunt Anne decided then and there to be cremated in order to avoid all possible risk of ever finding her skull in such an ignominious position.

Though Louis XI. is far ahead of both his predecessors and successors in the devices of cruelty, other kings and their victims have also left a record in this gruesome fortress. Down, down into the darkness we went with a flickering candle to see the cell where Ludovico Sforza, the great Duke of Milan, suffered for nine long years as prisoner of Louis XII. Through a small slit high up in the wall the daylight trickled, and a little square scratched on the wall opposite marked where the solitary patch of light was wont to fall. This cell was decorated with odd frescoes in dull red paint, pathetic inscriptions and designs which gave one an overpowering feeling of coming suddenly into close contact with the stormy, courageous spirit of that great fighter, chastened perhaps, but neither subdued nor despairing. "He was permitted a ladder besides his brush and paints," remarked our guide, pointing to the frescoes which reached high on the wall. "One treated him with leniency after all, in comparison with others. Unhappily he died just as his release was about to arrive."

ARMED
WITH
PATIENCE.

Here was an inscription one could read as though traced only yesterday by that strong hand:—

"Je porte en prison pour ma devise
Que je m'arme de patience
Par force de peine l'on me fait pouser."

The poor Sforza, his tempestuous, impatient soul must have done a good deal of growing in this dark dungeon before he could write so philosophically. Let us hope he accomplished all his purgatory in this world, and that on death's release his patience-armed spirit went straight into light and freedom.

François I^{er} also kept his prisoners in this dark

LA GEN-
TILLE
AGNES,

fortress, one of whom was Saint Vallier, the father of the gay Diane de Poitier. She exerted all her influence to obtain his freedom, and one day arrived herself bringing the poor prisoner's release. Like an angel of light this "Frau Venus" shone suddenly on his darkness. His hair had become snow-white during his short residence, and Diane shuddered with pity and horror as she stepped down into the damp and darkness of her father's cell. Quickly as possible she settled the business and returned to her life in the sunshine.

We felt every sympathy with her, and with profound relief mounted once more to the daylight and breathed again the fresh, warm air of heaven.

Aunt Anne would not even look into the old church lest she should be shown more traces of blood and murder. The grand old twin steeples, outlined so finely against the blue sky, were a good and pleasant memory to carry away, and she would run no risks, she declared, of spoiling it, though our guide assured her there was nothing to cause Madame *les frissons* in the ancient collegiate church.

We made our way straight to the château and paid our respects to the "gentille Agnes." For here in a tiny chapel in her own tower is the beautiful tomb of Agnes Sorel. A strange contrast to that other chapel underground! With her small, fine hands crossed on her breast, and two lambs at her feet, she lies in her dainty robes as though sleeping, an expression of perfect peace on her exquisite face. "Angels all glorious watch at her head."—small, tender angels, but glorious all the same, and looking down on her as though they claimed her for their own. She suggests some virgin saint rather than the mistress of a

king. The epitaph on her tomb bears out this idea—"Une douce et simple Colombe plus blanche que les cygnes, plus vermeille que la flamme," it describes her, and goes on to extol her gentleness, charity and loving-kindness, which won the love of all.

HER
EPITAPH.

The spot where she now rests is not where they first buried her, but the ungrateful old monks whose church and convent owed everything to her munificence, never ceased worrying for two hundred years till they got her poor little bones and exquisite tomb removed from their church, wherein the odour of sanctity must be preserved at all costs, they maintained.

Agnes Sorel was born in the same year as Jeanne d'Arc, and though her influence over the king only began some ten years after the death of Jeanne, and there is no record of the two ever having met, the character of the inspired young saviour of France must have greatly affected such an one as the "gentille Agnes."

Aunt Anne was seized with a great enthusiasm for her. "If she can look like that in marble, imagine what the living girl must have been! This sweet Agnes was a true saint, that is clear from the epitaph." She turned to the guide. "For the first time in my life I regret that I am not Pope of Rome. I would canonise this sweet lamb at once."

The guide shook his head dubiously. "Madame has, without doubt, reason. But never would one permit it. There would be the same history as with the old monks."

"The old monks have had to bow the knee to *Saint Mary Magdalen*," retorted Aunt Anne; "and the 'gentille Agnes,' gentle as the dove, white as

A SELF-
RIGHTEOUS
CHAPEL.

the swan, had never been through that saint's dark experiences. The love of Agnes was noble and ennobling, and was for one man only." She turned to me. "I should like to add to the epitaph, 'More faithful than the virtuous wife, more pure in heart than the cloistered nun,' and send a copy of it to my sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, and other of my most respectable female relations." With this end in view Aunt Anne set to work promptly and made a copy of the epitaph.

The other point of interest in the château of Loches is the tower of Anne de Bretagne, another of those highly respectable ladies who inspire Aunt Anne with a keen desire to say shocking things. The little private oratory and bedroom roused her ire. "A self-righteous, self-advertising little place," said she; "no more built for the glory of God, this chapel, covered with her own device of ermine tails and festooned cord, than the bathroom of Marie Antoinette at Fontainebleau, covered with cupids and roses."

Certainly one did feel that honour and glory were claimed here, first and foremost, for Anne, twice Queen of France!

Outside the château there is a gigantic chestnut tree, planted by the ever-present hand of François I^{er}, "the biggest in France," as our guide assured us; "the biggest in the world, for that matter; why even the ladies and gentlemen from America had declared they could show nothing in the way of chestnut trees to compare with it."

The château, which was once the home of that most gorgeous and decorative king, is now inhabited by the very unromantic and commonplace figure of a *sous-préfet* whose porter sells souvenirs of Loches at

the lodge. Oh, shades of François and Louis, Agnes and Anne !

LES ANG-
LAISES.

Descending the hill our driver pointed out a villa where, he said, dwelt *une dame Anglaise*. Aunt Anne was just observing that Loches was a place where no one would ever think of remaining more than three hours. She resented this information, therefore, as a reflection on her judgment; but I consoled her by pointing out that no rule can be made for that strange combination of eccentricity and conventionality, the British woman. She is a bird that will perch on any spot—she will even build her a nest, a nest, too, without a mate.

“Well,” said Aunt Anne, “it beats me how anyone can get acclimatised to inhaling this atmosphere of dead men’s bones. I have had enough Loches to last me to the end of my days.”

LIFE IN A CONVENT.

A PICTURE
IN WOOL-
WORK.

WE had not lost sight of our purpose of going into a convent—a convent on a vine-clad hill. With this idea in mind we knocked at the door of an old house in an old street in Tours, just off the Place de la Cathédrale.

There was nothing to mark it as a convent except the small grille which enabled a cautious inspection before opening the door to Heaven alone knew what possible menace to the poor nuns' safety.

We enquired from the placid portress if *pensionnaires* or *dames en retraite* were admitted to their convent.

She bade us enter a salon, congested with furniture, and hermetically closed, and went to fetch the Sœur Économe, who would give us full information on the subject.

Everything in the room was made of plush or velvet, except a life-size statue of a saint in plaster. Even the pictures were of wool-work; one of them representing a stately white château on a vine-clad hill, with a broad river cunningly winding at the foot, specially interested me. Something in the treatment suggested the subject as allegorical, and I had just made out the river as the Old Serpent, the château with its head in the clouds as the Church, and the vines the Eucharistic Sacrament, when the door opened, and a small, black-robed nun stood a moment

regarding us searchingly, then advanced and responded cordially to our *Bon jour, madame*. We explained our errand.

20TH
CENTURY
MARTYRS.

"Oh, yes," they admitted *les pensionnaires*—it was their principal *raison d'être*, for theirs was a convent *hospitalier* founded on those lines three hundred years ago. For a very small payment they took in poor ladies, and gentlemen also, of the upper classes, and tended them in old age and sickness. In former times wealthy women of the world had not infrequently so ended their days, thankful for the repose and peace of the convent, and some in gratitude had left their fortunes to sustain the good work for the benefit of their poorer sisters. Now, alas! evil days had fallen on the poor nuns and their unhappy country, the work of MM. Combes, Pelletan and Co. being the climax. In their case, out of all the many convents of this Order, only fifteen houses remained, all the rest having been appropriated, lands and houses, without compensation of any sort, by the Government; the nuns, old and young, turned adrift into the world to beg or die. That they retained even fifteen houses was owing to the fact that their services were given to the hospitals in the neighbouring towns at an almost nominal fee, which no doubt the Government found for the moment more convenient than paying regular trained nurses.

The Sister spoke without bitterness, in the same level distinct tones she would have used in recounting the martyrdom of St. Laurence, or any other bygone historical fact. How long the remaining houses of the Order would be spared no one knew—they were prepared for expulsion and wholesale confiscation of property at any moment. The parent house was a

A PEACE-
FUL LIFE.

few kilometres from Chinon, up on the hills, overlooking the valley of the Vienne, a chosen spot of "la belle Touraine." The Sister pointed to the wool-work picture on the wall—*la voilà !*

"Here is our convent," said Aunt Anne, and then ~~and~~ there arranged with the Sœur Économe to write to the Mère Générale about our visit. It was not customary to receive *les dames pensionnaires* for so short a time as we proposed, but doubtless it could be arranged, and perhaps we might return there, suggested the Sister, if the life pleased us.

"It is more than possible that I shall desire to live and die there," Aunt Anne assured her earnestly. "A quiet, beautiful spot away from the world is what I am seeking for my last years."

"Ah, Madame, you have there a very good and wise thought, to retire from this world and give the heart to *le bon Dieu*—behold the only means of obtaining peace."

So said the good Sister, little knowing her visitor. Peace and quiet are not synonymous, though so often misleadingly identified. As well imagine a caged wild bird to be enjoying "peace," as Aunt Anne, if circumstances obliged her to experience a prolonged spell of quiet and rest. But she has many moods, and undoubtedly was just then disposed for peaceful convents.

Before taking our leave, the Sister showed us the garden and *cour* where several groups of old ladies, like soft, comfortable tabby cats, were seated under the trees, purring gently as they knitted or dozed. It was difficult to picture Aunt Anne as one of them, at any age.

Our nun had a face which bespoke singular energy

and vigour, well under control, and dealt out with discretion, but ever within call. Yet the apparent monotony of her existence would have deadened most people's vitality. For twenty-five years her world had been restricted to those walls—only twice had she made a short visit to the mother-convent near Chinon, never once been out into the street, or entered the beautiful old cathedral in the Place just outside. She spoke of being so occupied she scarcely ever had time to read.

CÉSAR'S
LOAD.

* * * * *

At the little station of Chinon the convent conveyance met us, a very small and ancient 'bus, the inside already amply filled by two very fat old ladies in black apparel. The driver cordially invited us all three to enter. Aunt Anne slid in sideways and disappeared among the black folds of the inmates. I tried to follow, and to the dismay of the black ladies opened a window with the hope of thereby stowing away an arm and shoulder, and at the same time letting in a breath of the warm summer air. But the difficulty of finding room for my head even minus a hat proved too great; to the relief of the old ladies I wriggled out, and making way for the more accommodating little person of Gertruda, mounted the box with the driver, who by this time had piled our luggage in a precarious heap on the roof. Fortunately the convent horse, César by name, was large and bony, and in his capacity for pulling through hard jobs not unworthy of his prototype.

For some distance our road lay along the banks of the Vienne, a lovely, fertile valley, vineyards and orchards on either hand. Then came a steep climb up the side of the hill. Here we dismounted in order to

THE MÈRE
GÉNÉRALE. relieve César of at least some of his burden. Finally on the summit rose the white convent.

Great wooden gates shut out the curious eyes of the world. We walked in at a small side door and found ourselves in the spacious *cour d'honneur*, green and peaceful. A statue of the patron saint faced us on entering, while from the door of her *parloir* next to the chapel, the Mère Générale herself came forward to greet us, followed by three or four black-robed nuns. A very imposing old lady, this reverend Mother, about four feet nothing in height and the same in breadth, but with dignity enough to equip a couple of Empresses and much shrewd intelligence in her kindly old face. We made each other deep courtesies and exchanged polite but not exaggerated speeches. Aunt Anne, suiting her manners to her company, might have been a Mère Générale herself from the austere courtesy of her demeanour. The reverend Mother presented to us the Mère Sous-Prieure, a lady of thin, long, straight lines of the stained-glass mediæval type of saint, whose soul wears away the body as an active sword its scabbard. Talking with her one felt time roll back at least three hundred years. The Mère Générale enquired after the Tours Sisters and of our visit to their convent. It was evident Tours presented no other serious interest to her, for when we spoke of the opening of the new Hôtel de Ville she shook her head and said "those things were of the secular world, which existed not for her."

As we walked towards the convent door another nun joined us, of very cheerful and healthy appearance; she was introduced as the Sœur Économe, and to her we were confided that we might be taken to our rooms and at once make ready for the dinner at six o'clock.

We were asked if we would prefer to dine apart, but chose rather the company of the other *dames pensionnaires*. I had hoped we should feed with the nuns in their own austere refectory, but since we were not prepared for training as mediæval saints, perhaps it was as well that no such thing was suggested. The Sœur Économe explained as we went upstairs and down one long passage after another that our rooms were in the corridor of *les messieurs* all those in the ladies' wing being occupied, and I was further told not to be alarmed if in the night I heard groans—it was the *monsieur* next door who had acquired that habit, and being of a ripe age, eighty-six, was unable to break it.

Our bedrooms were large and comfortable, with heavy, old-fashioned pieces of furniture. Having pictured to myself a little white-washed cell bare as the "Prophet's chamber," with perhaps a fresco after "Angelico" on the walls, and a crucifix over the bed, I was disappointed at the luxury of my apartment, which possessed a *cabinet de toilette*, a passage and double entrance. As there were also communicating doors on both sides I had a good deal of locking up to do before feeling the groaning *monsieur* safely shut out. But I made Aunt Anne, who with Gertruda was at the furthest end of the corridor, promise to come at my first piercing scream and on no account wait for the second, according to ghost story custom.

There were some ten other *dames pensionnaires* assembled for dinner in the refectory. All dressed in black, most of them with heavy funereal erections on their heads, a lugubrious-looking company at the first glance. *Messieurs les pensionnaires*, to our disappointment we learnt, dined in a separate room.

CONVENT
QUARTERS.

OUR FIRST
CONVENT
DINNER.

The average age—though, thanks to the admirably healthy and regular life, of the convent, the ladies did not look it—was between seventy and eighty. Youth was represented by a young person of about thirty-five, of an air very discreet and *comme il faut*, and a pale lady some ten years older. Both these were birds of passage like ourselves, sent by their doctor for a quiet summer up in the hills. All the other *pensionnaires* were stationary, some being of twenty years' standing and more. Besides those present, about half a dozen dined in their own rooms.

The old ladies sat down to table with an air of absorbed attention to the business on hand, no one wasted time in talk till the first three courses were over. Their appetites filled one with amazement, and spoke well for the air of Touraine. Their "table manners" left something to be desired. Not only did they help themselves in the frank spirit of "*après moi le déluge*," but having piled up all their plates would hold they proceeded to gobble as if the devil would take the hindmost. A liberal portion of soup, two enormous slices of melon, a *ragoût* of mutton, followed by roast beef, a plateful of French beans and a *compôte* of stewed plums, disappeared in no time. But the sweet-faced little sister who served us heard nothing but grumbles. "How, then! one cuts these slices of melon very small, *ma sœur*." "Again the *compôte* of plums, *ma sœur*! But they finish never, then, these plums!" and so on.

We escaped from the dining-room as soon as possible, the windows being tightly closed, into the garden which runs the whole length of a wide terrace on the side of the hill—a charming garden with *bosquets* of trees and many little paths and shady

nooks. We had passed unconcernedly through a small iron gate when suddenly we were confronted with a stout, good-natured looking old Sister telling her beads. She advanced with a broad smile.

TRESPASS-
ING.

"Ah, but pardon, *mesdames*, you know not perhaps where you are! This is the garden of the Sisters, '*le jardin de Marie*.'" And she laughed and chuckled as if we had been caught doing something of unthinkable impropriety but awfully funny.

We apologised profusely, and she explained as she conducted us back to the little gate that usually it was locked, for no one was permitted to enter without the leave of the Mère Générale.

Continuing our walk, we were joined presently by our first friend, the Sœur Économe, of a wonderful ugliness but adorable good-nature and kindness. She hurriedly took us in charge; it was about time, for we had gone from Scylla to Charybdis, our erring feet having strayed into the garden specially allotted to *messieurs les pensionnaires*. To pass quickly through, however, was permitted, being inevitable, if one would enter the large garden beyond, common ground for all.

"But in the garden of the *messieurs* one remains not," said the Sœur Économe; "and if one sees approaching a *monsieur* one turns quickly into another alley, is it not so?"

I fear Aunt Anne's agreement with this last proposition had rather an artificial ring—she had just announced her intention to me of cultivating some of these gentlemen.

* * * * *

Sunday morning! At five o'clock the convent chapel bell sounded. I got up and threw open the

CONVENT
BELLS.

green shutters. The broad waters of the Vienne lay below glistening in the morning sun, the wooded and vine-clad hills rose opposite and beyond the forest of Fontevrault, all the valley with its vineyards and orchards ready for a rich harvest.

We were evidently the subject of keen interest to the entire convent. Everyone knew of our innocent trespass in the *jardin de Marie*. During the morning we had visits from four Sisters on different pretexts—all full of solicitude for our comfort. One came to know how we had passed the night, were our beds and covers as we liked, had I been disturbed by the old gentleman who groaned? I assured her I had heard no sound worse than that of a mouse, than which, though I would not confess it, there was to me none more alarming. Another gentle Sister appeared to tell us the hour of *déjeuner*, in case we did not recognise the bell at eleven o'clock. Most necessary, since bells either for services or meals were going continually. The *grand' messe* was at 8.30, but frequent *messes* preceded it, beginning with the one at six. The Sœur Économe desired to know what she could give us in the place of the dishes we had refused at dinner. She had evidently received a faithful account of every morsel swallowed, and was upset at Aunt Anne's diet of no meat. "Had it been Friday and Madame a Catholic, oh, yes, but Madame was Protestant, was it not so? and the day a Saturday."

Aunt Anne refused to be classified as a Protestant, or defined in any way, much to the perplexity of the good Sister. "Eating no meat is a question of health, not religion, my dear Sister. Everyone after sixty is better without it. Yes, and your old *dames pensionnaires*, you should not give them two big dishes

of meat in the evening, not more on Saturday than Friday. They eat too much, those there!"

WIRELESS
TELE-
GRAPHY.

The Sister laughed. "Ah, but there would be a fine disturbance if we followed Madame's counsel; *les dames pensionnaires* they say they become old and need the meat to give force. Those dames," sighed the Sister, "are very difficult for their food."

"I wish the Mère Générale would make me Sœur Économe for a month," remarked Aunt Anne drily. The good Sister burst into peals of delighted laughter at the idea. And this, like everything else we did or said, was known in a few minutes to the Mère Générale and everyone else. We came to the conclusion there must be a perfect system of wireless telegraphy in that convent.

At *déjeuner* we improved the acquaintance of our fellow *dames pensionnaires*. There were ten of them. The two who drove up with us from the station held a position of importance, being among the oldest residents. They sat at the head of the table, and generally started the subject of conversation. Next them sat a lady beside whom they appeared as very sylphs, a *demoiselle* with the large, handsome features of a ship's figurehead, and the same durability and imperviousness to time and weather, for we learnt with amazement that her age was seventy-eight. The fact that the last thirty years had been spent in the peace and comfort of this hospitable convent no doubt went for something. Opposite to her was the eldest of the *dames pensionnaires*, Mme. Mallines, aged eighty-four, but no wise disqualified on this account from keen and close competition as each succeeding dish appeared. Never did she pass a dish, but on the contrary, supplemented

A REST
CURE.

the ordinary fare, as did several of the others, with a raw egg in her soup, and a custard or milk pudding with the stewed fruit. She talked shrewdly and rather amusingly, but had evidently small belief in any motive save self-interest, in spite of her life in a convent where she received devoted care and attention, and a most comfortable, dignified home for a mere nominal payment. She considered, doubtless, she amply repaid the good nuns by giving them such an opportunity for self-sacrifice, and so laying up their treasure in heaven.

Then came a mother and daughter, as like each other as the double doors of the convent. Whatever one said the other supplemented with a modified correction. "It rained for two hours during the night," says Madame. "One might more truly say that the rain fell for two hours and a half," says Mademoiselle, without once raising eyes from plate. They continually urged one another to eat more, as though they were laying up stores within for a prolonged siege.

Next to me was a lady from Tours, spending the summer *en retraite* for her health, a prescription which had succeeded admirably. Her doctor had ordered bracing air, freedom from all care, and pleasant, though not exciting society; all this she had found at the convent, and for six francs a day.

The youngest of the *pensionnaires* was from Loches. I hoped to find her steeped in the lurid lore of Louis XI., but I found her no more interested in that royal torturer than an average Londoner would be in Richard III. Her retreat was also for the sake of her body rather than her soul. Both these last ladies wound up their repast with cups of "tizane,"

"camomille," or "menthe." As to the two remaining *pensionnaires* they were silent as tomb-stones and less communicative, for we did not even learn their names. They devoted themselves steadily and solidly to the business in hand, like the rest, but expended no breath in idle conversation. We discussed the politics and funeral of a noted statesman just dead. He met with general disapproval, and was classed to my surprise in the same category as those destroyers of the welfare of France, Combes and Pelletan, though known to have disagreed with them. Even his wife was not spared, but was described as "*méchante comme le diable*"—poor lady! Why, I failed to find out; *dames pensionnaires* do not condescend to give reasons—they assert emphatically, and go on eating. They gave us a good deal of information about England in this same spirit, and told us some interesting facts about Scotland, the semi-barbaric condition of its kilted inhabitants, and the dense fog which forbade the sun ever to pierce the thick atmosphere, which delighted Aunt Anne—not quite the effect they intended to produce, I fancy.

We were waited on by the sweetest, freshest little nun. The fads and gourmandise of the old dames she treated with a gentle, kindly indulgence, and never-failing patience. Her face suggested she had found what Matthew Arnold calls the "Secret of Jesus." The sweet grey eyes were lit with a quiet, innocent joy, without a hint of the sadness and resignation painters are wont to give to the typical nun's face. She was young, and pretty as a spring flower, but capable and clear-headed, and no one seeing her with her charges could doubt her lively sense of humour. "*Sœur Primèvère*" I called her. "She is perhaps a Protestant

A DAUGHTER OF
JOB.

CONVENT
MUSIC.

Saint, that one?" she enquired. But she shook her head suspiciously when I said Primevère was the fair daughter of Job, one of the second batch, canonised for her patience with trying old ladies and gentlemen. Sweet little "Sœur Primevère." I hope the successors of MM. Combes and Pelletan will leave her to bloom in peace in her native soil!

Gertruda and I attended vespers in the convent chapel. The Sisters sat behind the altar separated by a *grille*. One of them played the harmonium and all the dear things sang. I am sure to the angels the music was sweet, but to mortal ears, untrained for the subtler spiritual sounds, it was a little painful, Monsieur l'Aumônier's rasping voice not only continually in advance of the harmonium and the nuns' thin pipes, but half a tone off the key besides. Sœur Célestine, who acted as organist, improvised the harmonies to the chants as she went on, with disastrous results, poor dear, as far as harmony was concerned.

The interest of the convent in our doings and sayings reached a climax on hearing that Aunt Anne was going to take a bath! She despises such compromises as travelling rubber baths, and nothing satisfying her but a *salle des bains* we were conducted by a Sister on a visit of inspection to the *cour d'honneur*. Here between the parloir of the Mère Générale and the chapel, a door announced the boasted *salle des bains*, "rarely used except in cases of severe illness," said the Sister.

The preparations requisite being exceedingly complicated, five o'clock in the afternoon was fixed as the most convenient hour. A Sister was in attendance for an hour before the important ceremony, initiating Gertruda into the needful precautions, one of which

was to place a sheet inside the bath before pouring in the water. The shape of the bath was curious, more resembling a well than anything else, about four feet in length, with a hood at one end like a child's perambulator. Two windows high in the wall communicated with the nuns' wing of the convent, in a position to command a fine view of the *salle des bains*.

THE
"SALLE
DES
BAINS."

The ceremony over, the bather became an object of thrilling interest to the entire community. The portress standing in the doorway of her lodge, Monsieur l'Abbe just outside the chapel, the lay Sisters at the entrance to the *basse cour* and the *dames pensionnaires* at the refectory window, all waited to see Aunt Anne emerge from the bath-room and cross the courtyard.

"Ah, but Madame your Aunt, she has taken a bath? She is then suffering?" enquired one of the dames.

She regarded me with perplexity, not unmixed with incredulity, when I answered that it was a daily custom of my friend and not on account of illness.

"Ha! but it is the doctor who orders this treatment without doubt," said the stoutest of the old ladies. "I myself was obliged at one time to take baths of mud for three weeks, to diminish the fat."

My repudiation of this motive for Aunt Anne's bath caused the old lady great irritation.

"My good Demoiselle," struck in a third dame, "you are not aware of the *maladies* for which the doctors ordain baths. If it is not for one cause such as suggests Madame de Nozières, well, it is for another equally serious—it may be to calm the brain. I observed last night the lady ate no meat, no doubt for the same cause."

THE MAD
ENGLISH.

This was clearly a barbed shaft at Aunt Anne's lively conversation and irrepressible vitality.

"But I assure you, Madame," I insisted, "it is not by order of a doctor at all, but just a habit we others have in England to take a bath daily."

"If it is true what you say there, Mademoiselle," said the first old lady, "that your Aunt at her age takes a bath without the order of her doctor, she commits a grave imprudence—there is nothing else to be said."

Aunt Anne entered at this point, and a lively discussion commenced on hygienic questions—fresh air, open windows by night, not to mention day—diet and exercise. The conclusion of the whole matter was that Aunt Anne was written down a "freak" according to the *dames pensionnaires'* standard, and solemnly warned that if she continued in her mad career a *coup* or a *crise* would infallibly carry her off before long.

"Well, never mind," said Aunt Anne, "while I do live here below I shall at all events rejoice in the fresh air of heaven by day and night, and thank the good God for my daily hot bath."

"One always recounted to me that the English were a people of an exaggerated eccentricity," murmured the stout dame to her neighbour; "I see well one lied not!"

* * * * *

Sunday evening in the convent garden. No one can picture a more ideal atmosphere of peace and rest, as, sitting on the low stone wall, the silver grey of the olives overhead, we looked down on the green valley of the Vienne. The setting sun painted the river all red and gold as it wound towards the west; while at our feet the newly-risen moon turned it to shining

silver. "Certainly I shall come here to die," said Aunt Anne fervently; but I suggested we should live here a few weeks first.

A LAND OF
BEAUTY.

We rejoiced that these gentle nuns, who deny themselves all individual possessions and all beauty save that of the soul, do not feel it their duty to bandage their eyes. For here at least they have a rich possession, a constant, ever-varying picture gallery from their garden terrace, rejoicing the eyes and making glad the heart. Whether they consciously appreciate it matters as little as whether the birds and flowers know why they sing and bloom. One thing is sure, those poor nuns who are banished from their land to the cold, dark north are conscious enough of loss.

Presently a group of black-robed Sisters came noiselessly towards us through the trees, and we felt ourselves signally honoured when the Mère Générale, leaning on the strong arm of the Sœur Économe and followed by the Mère Sous-Prieure and the Sœur Angélique, herself drew up and wished us a "good evening."

The reverend Mother was in conversational mood, and spoke to us of our country and the gracious hospitality of England towards the expelled Orders. Aunt Anne, who has little sympathy with the Church of Rome when rearing her head proudly and represented by autocratic and overbearing prelates, on hearing of the ruined and banished Orders, whose members had been devoted to works of charity and self-denial, in the name of England opened arms and heart to all.

"Come, continue to come to us, you poor dears," she urged. "We will do all we can for you in old England."

While the details for the carrying out of this hospitable invitation were being arranged, the other

A REAL
VOCATION.

nuns formed a circle round me, all most anxious to talk. Their relation to the Mère Générale appeared full of affection and, though respectful, without any restraint. They constantly appealed to her to corroborate what they said with "*n'est-ce pas, ma mère ?*"

After the *mères* wished us good night, and walked on to the shrine of the Madonna to say an evening prayer, other Sisters joined us. I asked one of these, an intelligent, good-looking woman, to take a little stroll. This required a serious consultation, being, they told us, a most unusual proceeding, but two of the number consented at last to take a little walk with us in the big garden. Only on Sunday were they permitted to go outside their own enclosure, and then but for a little quarter of an hour after *déjeuner* and dinner. My good-looking nun, Sœur Marie-Marthe, told me a great deal of her story. She was full of life and eager energy, "of a most ardent nature," as the Sœur Économe described her, a Frenchwoman of the temperament of the Midi, born at Marseilles. It seemed strange that she had chosen the nun's restricted life—she explained it saying she had a passion for nursing the sick and no vocation for marriage. In England she would no doubt have been a hospital nurse. Her relations had bitterly opposed her wish to enter a convent. Her father, whose favourite child she was, declared he would rather see her buried alive in her coffin, for that would be but a few hours' suffering, whereas the conventual life was long years of martyrdom. How little he knew! She waited till she was of age, and the day after left home for ever, without any farewell save a letter to her father, and entered the convent here. She had both brothers and sisters at home, and no special duty

claimed her. All her relations except her father had come to her ordination, when she received the black veil and took the final vows, but the poor father never consented to see her again, though he sent his full pardon and blessing before he died. She had never regretted the step, Oh, never, though during the year of novitiate her heart had cried out yearning for her own people, and only the conviction that the voice of God called her to walk in that narrow path had upheld her resolution. She had been a nun for fifteen years. Time had tested without cooling her enthusiasm. The rule of this Order is liberal as compared with others, and permits the relations of the sisters to come and see them at any time, and to speak with them face to face, but the nuns may never again visit their homes. They may receive letters at any time, though they themselves may only write once in three months, and all letters received and sent must first be read and sealed by the Mère Générale.

A LATTER-
DAY
MIRACLE.

We discussed the life of St. Catherine Emerich, that extraordinary German peasant girl who, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, revived all the most weird phenomena of the saints of the middle ages—stigmata, trances, visions, miracles of healing, and prolonged fasts. Sœur Marie-Marthe was surprised that I, a heretic, had read this book, and her interest in me redoubled when I told her it had been given me by the niece of the author of this strange biography, that friend of Goethe, who came in idle mood as the brilliant sceptical man of the world to see the curious latter day miracle-worker and seer, and remained four years by the bedside of the saint writing down, in her own striking and poetic language, her visions till she died. A stranger miracle than any other reputed to her!

THE EVER-
ACTIVE
ONE.

We both agreed that this saint was by no means one to be taken as an example for ordinary mortals, and the Sœur Économe showed her wisdom in approving the rule that these exotic lives are not permitted to be much studied by the nuns. The convent boasts a library, but it is a rare thing for the Sisters ever to open a book of any sort, and as to a newspaper, no such invention of the devil dare show itself in the place, unless in the rare case of some *pensionnaire* receiving one by post.

"We have no time for those things of the world," explained the Sœur Économe, when I asked her if they read about the wars and affairs of Europe. "They do not concern us or our work—the affairs of the world change and pass continually. They are but the shadows of the real," she said, unconsciously quoting Plato. Showing us the beehives she observed how like to humans were the busy, pre-occupied little inhabitants. "We look on the human wars and disputes even as we regard the affairs of this hive," she said.

I suggested that the acts of the French Parliament must have touched the Order rather closely. She allowed of course this was so. "The devil had been terribly active lately in that chamber," said Sœur Marie-Marthe, and the Mère Sous-Prieure had found it needful to keep *au courant* of his doings, she being the one appointed for this unpleasant but necessary duty.

Sœur Marie-Marthe and I parted with mutual regret and the hope—though a very uncertain one, for the nun can never call any hour her own—of meeting again. The Sœur Économe we see often, it being her special business to look after the material welfare

of the *pensionnaires*. This she could not do more thoroughly if she held that we poor heretics, possessing only bodies, must therefore concentrate attention entirely upon them.

MESSIEURS
LES
PENSION-
NAIRES.

* * * *

It was some days before Aunt Anne's bold desire to improve the acquaintance of *messieurs les pensionnaires* got beyond a passing and very distant bow from a couple of old Abbés in the garden, and an occasional glimpse from her windows of other venerable gentlemen. One aged eighty-four had a suite of rooms with his old wife aged eighty-two. They were known in the convent as "le jeune ménage," and looked an ideal Darby and Joan as arm in arm they toddled off to the chapel whenever the bell announced mass or vespers. Fourteen years they have dwelt in the convent on the hill, waiting in serenity and peace till the summons shall come to go up higher. They had once money and children, and a fine position in the world, the Sœur Économe told us; now all were gone, and they thanked the good God for the shelter and peace of this happy home, praying daily that the ruthless hand of the Government might be stayed before it "chased" these loving daughters. For what would become of "le jeune ménage," turned adrift on the world with but ten francs a day to live on!

"Monsieur l'Abbé Lagrange has returned from the pilgrimage to Lourdes," announced the Sœur Économe one day. That afternoon I came upon Aunt Anne walking in our favourite bosquet, deep in converse with a tall, thin, black-garbed priest, and this in spite of the fact that the Sœur Économe had declared him to

EVER-
GREEN
LEAVES.

be a man both silent and reserved, and had held out little encouragement when we expressed a wish to hear about his journey.

"Monsieur l'Abbé and I have had such an interesting talk," said Aunt Anne. "In the first place we have discovered we are twins, both of us sixty-two in the month of May—spring flowers gifted with eternal youth, is it not so, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

"Madame is too amiable thus to designate an old leaf of autumn," answered the Abbé, his serious face relaxing. "For Madame herself, she surely makes an error in her age!"

"Autumn leaves!" cried Aunt Anne indignantly. "When you can walk your twenty miles, and me, I can jump the height of my head! My dear Monsieur l'Abbé, if you were a married man you would know that no woman ever adds to her age—do not imagine they tell you the truth even in the confessional. Felicity," she turned to me, "we must go to Lourdes next year; Monsieur l'Abbé and I have arranged it all, and he is coming too. We must go by night, third class, in the pilgrims' train. That is the only proper way—*en pénitence* you know. I only wish it were not too late this year."

The Abbé and I exchanged a solemn bow. He made as though he would now retire, but Aunt Anne laid her hand on his arm. "No, no, Monsieur l'Abbé, I want to ask you many more questions; you must not go. Remember you are not wasting your time, for you are converting a free-thinker."

"But Madame is English, and therefore Protestant, is it not so?" enquired Monsieur l'Abbé, with, it struck me, a slight shiver.

"I am cosmopolitan and a free-thinker," announced

Aunt Anne, refusing as usual to go into any cage. "But LOURDES. since listening to your description, so dramatic, of that magnificent gathering at Lourdes, twenty-four thousand people all united in one glorious movement of faith towards God, of love and charity towards their suffering fellow creatures, I have felt myself becoming a Catholic—a true, devout Catholic."

The Abbé then explained to us that the miracles of healing, though often remarkable, were the least impressive side of Lourdes. It was the atmosphere of faith and enthusiasm, and spiritual elevation, that healed and raised the soul as well as body. He himself went every year with a company of pilgrims, some thirty or forty men, themselves in excellent health, their object being to help by their prayers and penance the sick and suffering.

"For ten years I have never failed to make this pilgrimage," said the Abbé. "It is a great refreshment to the soul, even as a green oasis in the desert of the Sahara."

"You hear that, Felicity?" said Aunt Anne. "It is just what I want, what we all want. I can't imagine why we have not all been to Lourdes. We are so ignorant, we others, my dear Monsieur l'Abbé," and Aunt Anne placing her hand in his arm she walked him down the terrace in full view of all the convent windows. "We know nothing about it. You must come to England and give some lectures on Lourdes, just as Monsieur Sabatier did on that dear Saint François d'Assise."

Fortunately for the reputation of both Aunt Anne and the Abbé, the convent bell began to ring, for in spite of the close attendance of the chaperon, there was no disguising the fact that they were arm in arm, Aunt Anne

it is true, entirely unconscious of anything unusual, but the Abbé—well, I think he was relieved when that bell sounded; he drew up, bowed, and departed so hurriedly.

"To me he has the air of St. Anthony fleeing from temptation," I observed, as he disappeared. But Aunt Anne declared that far from fleeing, he had promised to visit her in England after superintending her pilgrimage to Lourdes.

* * * * *

**A DAY AT
CHINON.**

We walked to Chinon by the upper road, starting early, for we wanted to see the market, besides visiting the château. Gertruda, with a beautiful new market basket of green and red wicker, "came with," as she calls it.

Chinon is unique—so untouched by any modern hand. There stand the same narrow, tortuous streets, with, in some cases, the very same quaint old houses, through which Jeanne rode up to the château crowning the hill, to meet Charles VII. and receive permission to march her armies to the relief of Orléans. Jeanne the shepherd girl, aged seventeen, led by the same voice which had spoken to her in the fields and woods of Domrémy.

Chinon speaks of Jeanne at every turn—no doubt herein lies its special charm. Her name confronts you on the Quai, in the streets, her statue on the Place and in the Church of St. Etienne, while her tower stands overlooking the town, strong and solid as when she dwelt there for six weeks in 1429.

We found nothing much doing as yet in the old market place. The stalls were being set out and the turkeys, chickens and ducks giving feeble cries of remonstrance as, with legs tied, they were

unceremoniously bundled about. So we struggled up the steep stony road to the château, a long toiling grind, and I envied Jeanne her fine war-horse.

FOOT-
STEPS OF
JEANNE
D'ARC.

The small son of the gate-keeper was on duty and very important with his big bundle of keys, for Jeanne's tower and that of Henri II. are kept locked.

The ruins cover an enormous area, where clumps of trees and grassy knolls now grow between the towers, halls and dungeons. At each historic spot we drew up, and our small guide delivered a discourse with an accent and manner worthy of the Théâtre Français, but if you asked him a question in the middle he had to recommence from the beginning.

Here again we meet with Henry II. of England, for here, at the home of his race, he died broken-hearted at the failure of his dearest hopes and the discovery of the treacherous plot of John. John, that coward-hearted son, for whom he had desired to sacrifice the Cœur de Lion, surely a worthier object for his affection, and who had at least some excuse for plotting against his partial parent.

These three English kings are all buried at Fontevrault; away in the distance one could see where the forest of Fontevrault lay across the Vienne valley. Only a few days before we had visited the old monastery, now used as a prison, and there in a small side chapel of the convent church, in most unregal state, had found the two sons of Henry, those dire foes, resting side by side. The stone effigies had once been coloured, but the paint was almost worn away, giving a most dismal effect, enhanced still more by the sordid surroundings, for to reach the neglected-looking little chapel one was obliged to climb over the closely-packed prisoners' benches.

A BUSY
GHOST.

That the cowardly and treacherous John should meet with this fate seemed right enough, but the soul of Aunt Anne was filled with righteous indignation that the lion-hearted king should be kept in this durance vile in spite of all efforts to induce the French Government to permit his tomb to be removed to England. Then and there she was for organising a crusade to transport the remains of Richard to Westminster, or better still to Camelot. It must annoy him terribly that his bones lie in such company and such surroundings.

Our small guide took special delight in conducting us to the dark and dismal spots, where again we found ourselves confronted with that unwearying torturer, Louis XI. More crimes, more victims! His ghost must have a busy time if doomed to revisit the scenes of his atrocities in Touraine alone.

We were leaving the famous hall, nothing of which now remains but a ruined wall and great fireplace, where Jeanne knelt before the Dauphin, recognising him in spite of the disguise by which he tried to trick her, when we heard a loud calling from one of the towers. Our young guide declared it was not for him, and we walked on, the call, though fading with the distance, still continuing persistently, and with a note of distress if not despair, it struck me, in the tone. At last we insisted the boy should return and see if he were not wanted. He ran off, leaving us to admire the view, one worth admiring from that rocky height which commands the whole valley of the Vienne and country for miles around, while looking sheer down one gazes on the roofs and streets of the old town below.

Presently the boy returned and informed us that the cries had proceeded from a *monsieur* who had by

A STUDENT OF
RABELAIS.

mistake been locked up in the tower of Henri II. an hour or so ago. The gentleman had mounted to the summit to admire the panorama," said the boy; "he put himself to read and a profound sleep overcame him, without doubt, or he would have heard our voices," he remarked, knowingly. "The *monsieur* only perceived himself to be shut in when, on descending, he discovered the door could not be opened. The miserable one, he might well have remained there all day, perhaps even all the night, for visitors become rare now." The boy laughed as if it were a very good joke. "It was my pa-pa who locked the door," he said, by way of explanation.

Just then the unfortunate *monsieur* came in sight. He was shaking his fists and addressing the boy in forcible language. Seeing us he stopped, then with a joyful exclamation hurried forward, both hands outstretched in greeting. It was the notary of Chenonceau, Aunt Anne's friend "Blondin"!

"Ah, my dear ladies, what surprise! what joy! It is then to you I owe my life—you who have saved me from perhaps a lingering death. When I think of slowly starving alive in that frightful tower, which at night must be filled with ghosts of murdered men, I fall on my knees in gratitude before you." He shook hands with effusion.

"Enchanted to have rendered you a service my dear Monsieur," replied Aunt Anne, cordially. "It is certainly owing to us that the little rascal there went back for you. He says you fell asleep up there."

"The little good-for-nothing—he lies, my dear Madame. I was, as you may see here, plunged in the study of this work of Rabelais—I lived in the past

TOURAINE
MANNERS.

with Pantagruel. Here looking down upon the birth-place of Rabelais I forgot the prosaic present, the miserable custodian and his keys."

With an imploring aside that she would get rid of him soon, I left Aunt Anne to the *tête-à-tête*. I was sure Blondin was longing for, and walked on with our still laughing guide.

"It was a friend of Madame who was shut up? It was then serious?" the boy enquired, with evident satisfaction.

Having completed the tour, to my dismay the notary showed no sign of leaving us. On the contrary the bonds of gratitude now riveted him to our side, and Aunt Anne had not the heart to refuse, as I should have done, his request that he might escort us to the Hôtel de France, where we intended taking a light repast before beginning our marketing. He also purposed lunching there—what a good chance!

Our little guide was departing without any payment, quite satisfied at our having bought some of his picture postcards. Never were a peopleless mercenary than those of Touraine, with manners delightfully polite and of a most kindly hospitality. They are never in a hurry, in fact time is of no consequence. Clocks are rarely wound up, and when they are set going, differ so widely as to be no sort of guide to the time. The local trains have a sensible way of waiting for the people for whom they run. On market days, for instance, the train works on this thoroughly sound principle and waits for the people with baskets. The sun is really the only clock accepted throughout the country. At sunrise you get up, for there is work to be done, and no one in their senses thinks of knocking off work because a clock happens to point to five or

six p.m. when the hours till sunset are the sweetest and coolest in the day and you are working in your own vineyard.

AUNT
ANNE'S
PUR-
CHASES.

After *déjeuner* at the Hôtel de France we at last managed to shake off Blondin.

We plunged into the market, which was now in full swing. Every variety of Touraine cap was to be seen on heads of women old and young, many of them strikingly good-looking. All clamoured for our custom as we passed on a tour of inspection, looking very business-like, our first purchase having been two large market baskets.

Besides the country people who had each brought their own wares from garden, orchard and farm, there were rivals of the town—drapers, shoemakers and china shops being represented by booths and stalls.

Our baskets were soon full to overflowing with butter, eggs, cream cheeses and fruit of all kinds, besides an enormous Cinderella-looking pumpkin too big for any basket, and which was handed to Gertruda. We had also made purchases for several of our village friends. A woolly lamb for Charlemagne, a shawl for his grandmother, a pair of red shoes for Bérénice, and a baptism cloak for a young Tourangeau destined to be called Marc Aurèle.

While I was beguiled into buying earthenware pots of delightful greens and browns for holding flowers, taking no thought for the morrow how I could ever pack them, Aunt Anne went off to inspect turkeys.

When I joined her again, having arranged for the conveyance of my pots and jars to the convent, I found her the proud possessor of four large white ducks and two enormous black turkeys, the latter fierce-looking fellows, whose lives she was begging

NAPOLÉON
AND JOSÉ-
PHINE.

might be taken by their late mistress before they changed hands.

"Ah no, Madame," that lady was protesting. "Kill these unhappy ones here whom I have raised with my own children, who are even as my children—Napoléon and Joséphine they are named—that I will not—Madame must slay them herself—for me, see you, it would be a veritable assassination."

"Well, then, there is no help for it," said Grannie, turning to me; "you must carry the ducks; they are their late 'mother' says, 'quiet as sausages.' Gertruda has the melon and the basket of butter and eggs. I must tackle Napoléon and Joséphine. I only hope they won't take me back to their farm instead of coming with me to the convent."

This appeared by no means unlikely, and as Aunt Anne had other purchases to make we left all the birds in charge of an old lady selling teacups and plates spread out on the ground, while we proceeded to join the audience collecting round an eloquent salesman holding forth under a gigantic red umbrella.

He was selling what I believe is called dry goods, namely cotton and flannel garments. Over his own clothes he wore a chemise with a pink ribbon round the neck, a cotton jacket, and a frilled nightcap on his head.

He was young and good-looking, with crisp, curly hair and impudent, laughing eyes. He attracted a large audience if not many purchasers.

"See now, my ladies," he was shouting as we came up. "See this handsome petticoat of flannel. "He held aloft the garment. "Behold the excellent material. You are aged thirty years when you buy it—you are wearing it still at sixty. And the cut, how *chic*,

yet at the same time how generous ! You have enough material here for yourself and four of your children ! And again, my ladies, remark well what an economy you make, for with this fine colour and this pretty design, which finds itself equally on each side of the material, you wear this petticoat all the week on the one side, and on the Sunday you reverse it and wear the other ! Yet thirty-nine sous is the bagatelle for which you can obtain this veritable bargain. Thirty-nine sous ! Thirty-nine sous ! Ha ! You desire the pantaloons, my good lady ? ” He fixed his twinkling eyes on Aunt Anne, and began promptly folding up the garments. “ Hold—they are yours. No one else shall have them now even for forty sous. And see, I include at the same price the packing and also a portrait of the patron, together with his address, for those who buy these petticoats desire always another. Voilà ! ”

A “CHIC”
BUSINESS.

In spite of herself Aunt Anne took the parcel. “ It will do for the mother of Charlemagne,” she said. “ *Tiens, mon enfant*, you have talent, much talent,” she assured the youth. “ Why do you not go to Paris—you will make your fortune.”

“ Ha, but Chinon is more *chic* than Paris ! My fortune is already half made here—behold how all the world assembles to buy from me. My goods are nearly all gone—you ladies will buy quickly what remain. Then I shall sell kisses and locks of my hair to console the pretty girls who can obtain no more petticoats.”

He turned again to his stock, and held up two frilled night-caps.

“ Who desires to sleep well ? To enjoy a good repose ? Behold the pretty bonnets of night for two honest spouses ! ”

A USEFUL
NIGHTCAP.

"How much for the two?" enquired a wrinkled old dame, cautiously.

"Ha, you, Madame, have the eye for a perfect article. Remark well how admirably contrived is this bonnet." He placed it on his own head. "See how closely it covers the ears, so that never will the husband who wears this admirable bonnet deceive his wife, for he is rendered deaf to the voice of the temptress. Think of it, my ladies, a faithful husband to be had for fifteen sous. And in buying the two bonnets of night you obtain them as it were for nothing, twenty-four sous only—I lose by it."

"I will give thee eighteen, my brave boy, and a kiss for thy impudence," laughed the old wife. "My old one has been deaf as a pumpkin for thirty years, but he needs no spectacles to see a pretty face, the old rascal."

"For him one needs, then, a thick bandage for the eyes. Behold the affair——" But Aunt Anne at this point dragged me away.

"I have an uneasy feeling about Napoléon and Joséphine," she declared, so we made our way back to the china stall.

Aunt Anne's presentiment of impending disaster was more than justified by the scene that met our eyes, and the distracting sounds which greeted our ears. Turkeys and teacups appeared to be struggling on the ground in one terrible medley. The gobbles and shrieks of the birds mingled with the smashing of cups and saucers. Napoléon had escaped his Elba, and was, as the owner of the china described it, "making carnival." Having furiously assaulted the unhappy Joséphine, he was trampling ruthlessly into the choicest tea-sets, while a noisy crowd chased him

from one side to the other, in a vain endeavour to catch him.

NAPOLÉON VAN-
QUISHED.

Aunt Anne sprang into the midst, flung out the flapping Joséphine, whose legs still remained tied, but whose wings were working destruction all around, and then catching the loose end of string dragged Napoléon into a clear space, and with a courage and dexterity which drew forth the admiration even of experts, secured his two vigorous, struggling legs.

Then came the hour of reckoning. The *débris* was collected into a great heap, and the partially damaged into another—even as slain and wounded after Waterloo.

The proceeding was characterised by a desire on both sides for even-handed justice, and so refreshing was this absence of any attempt to overcharge or take advantage of the situation, that when all was duly settled we bought a complete new tea-set of the finest quality to present to the convent. This I undertook to carry, and we hired a small boy for the four white ducks, which kept up their character for sausage-like stillness, but they might have been drugged, and drugged with lead, they weighed so heavily.

The hill we had to climb was long and steep. I suggested a carriage, but was scornfully upbraided. "Whoever heard of driving home from market in a victorial! Get a two-wheel *charrette*, if you must drive," said Aunt Anne, knowing full well the difficulty, "for my part I infinitely prefer the walk. It will be delicious now the sun is not so hot."

I don't think we will ever attempt to repeat that delicious walk, at least not in the company of a Napoléon and a Joséphine. I found it quite bad enough with a basket of china and a packet of galettes, which,

GERTRUDA
SNUBBED.

though they did not weigh like ducks and turkeys, required abnormal care to prevent their breaking, and if there is one thing to which I have a rooted antipathy it is carrying anything, even myself, up a hill! My mind, however, was effectually diverted from my own sufferings by the excitement and entertainment I found in those of Aunt Anne. My heart was closed to pity, for had she not deliberately brought it on herself, and I knew her so fashioned she would infinitely prefer death in that hot, dusty road by the beak of Napoléon to asking for a helping hand or admitting for one instant that the job she had undertaken was too much for her. Gertruda made some ineffectual attempts which were speedily stamped out like smoking flax.

"Will the gracious lady not permit that I bear for a while the turkeys?"

"Certainly not. Napoléon would take you straight back to his farmyard, my poor child, and peck you like one of his squaws! You have no muscles to hold him!" answered her mistress.

"If the gracious lady would but sit herself down and rest a few minutes," suggested Gertruda tentatively, as we toiled upwards and ever upwards.

"Bosh!" said Aunt Anne, striding ahead, and giving an extra swing to prove the lightness of her burden. "Come along, and don't talk to me as if I was a fat, broken-winded German Gräfin!"

Good times, bad times, and all times pass over! The convent gates came in sight at last. The porteress opened the door, and then shrieked as we stumbled in, Napoléon and Joséphine suddenly showing new signs of animation. Her cries of amazement brought other Sisters, like a flight of black and white magpies, fluttering across the *cour*.

The Mère Générale opened her *parloir* door, the Sœur Économe emerged from her quarters, the sisters of the *basses cour* and the Sisters of the kitchen peered out from various windows, the *jeune ménage* appeared arm-in-arm from the garden, while the old Abbé who spends all day in the chapel and is persuaded with difficulty to exchange his stall for his bed at night, came out to see what unwonted emotion stirred the peaceful air of the convent. "I experienced a mortal fear," he told the Sœur Économe, "that the emissaries of Combes had arrived to chase us all."

RETURN
OF THE
PRO-
DIGALS.

Our offerings were all brought to the *parloir* of the reverend Mother. Napoléon and Joséphine, spreading wide their black wings and declining to enter, were dismissed to the *basse cour*, where their fate was speedily settled.

Great were the rejoicings over our gifts. The tea-cups were pronounced ravishing, adorable, and altogether too costly for the simple austerity of the convent. The galettes, fruit, butter and eggs each elicited fresh cries of delight and enthusiasm, and a new set of superlative adjectives, with which the French language is far more richly supplied than our cold and unemotional tongue.

We retired at last to prepare for dinner. But the old ladies treated us with marked coldness that evening. They did not approve of returning prodigals and noisy welcomes in the *cour d'honneur*.

* * * * *

A comfortable little victoria comes up for us about three times a week from Chinon, and better than all the royal châteaux and quaint old towns of Touraine, we love the forests, these wonderful forests of France, where you can drive for miles and miles through

IN THE
FOREST
CHINON.

A SONG OF
SPEED.

endless lovely green glades, or down the long, smooth roads which cut clean and straight through the heart of the greenwood. Other narrower paths, where the branches twine and arch overhead, tempt you to leave the carriage and wander on foot through a perfect fairyland of delicate silver beech and birch, young oak and fir, with an undergrowth of moss, fern and bracken. These woods and forests are so admirably kept that though nature has no air of having been tamed or restricted, one might be in some vast wooded garden, a Paradise before the Fall.

On this occasion, with Gertruda mounted on the box by the driver and all equipped with large baskets, we went in search of blackberries. Never were such blackberries on any English hedge! But the people of Touraine have such an abundance of other fruit that not even the children trouble to pick them. Everyone was busy gathering the grapes, apples, pears, peaches, plums and nuts, for in many orchards and vineyards the *récolte* had begun, and the trees were often so weighed down with fruit, the branches had to be raised from the ground by supports. It was a grey day, and the forest seemed to take on an air of gentle mystery, making it more fascinating than ever. Only one hideous, whizzing, exceedingly malodorous, motor disturbed our sylvan peace. It passed us like the Sud express, rejoicing in the long, straight run up and down hill without a bend for miles ahead.

"And the heart in your breast
Sings, as the World
Slips past in a dream
Of speed—
Speed on the knees of the Lord,"

sang Mr. Henley. So no doubt the bogies inside

with their masks and goggles and dust-cloaks were enjoying themselves in their own peculiar way (I must confess to having done the same on occasions), but one thing is certain, they saw no white heather among the clumps of purple which bordered the forest path, nor did they fill three huge baskets with the finest blackberries that ever shone on a tangled hedge.

HEART OF
THE
GREEN-
WOOD.

The keen-eared creatures of the forest fled long before the fierce onrushing monster came in sight. Of forest birds at least you cannot say "You can catch them like flies as, poor wretches, they race from you."

But for us, as we noiselessly rolled over the smooth grass-edged road, the birds more than once on this grey, silver day waited and sang. It was a sweet, solitary call, for singing birds are rare in these French forests. In the distance too we caught sight of a stag moving swiftly among the trees, while squirrels and hares peered out at us from between the bracken and beech trees. Our driver told us this forest of Chinon was a famous one for *la chasse*, specially of the stag; the wild boar was found also occasionally, but more in the forest of Fontevrault, where the cover was thicker. Our stalwart horse stood still as if cast in bronze, while we all gathered blackberries, the *cocher* devoting his energies to Gertruda and her basket with marked attention.

On the way home we stopped at the little village of St. Brique and bought sugar, an enormous packet of six kilos, rather more sugar than blackberries, but Aunt Anne does things *en grand*, and would have no less. Early that same morning we had been to the *laiterie* at the foot of the hill, and filled a big jug with thick yellow cream, a stream of which was pouring slowly from a mighty reservoir of milk into a row of

THE
FRENCH
NUN.

descending cans—a wonderful sight! The three men who worked this huge dairy were immensely amused at our interest. From Aunt Anne's display of technical knowledge they concluded her to be in the butter and cream line herself, and treated her with a sort of professional camaraderie. All the country-side sell their milk to this dairy. Carts go round collecting twice a day, blowing a horn to announce their arrival, and returning the skim milk in the evening. The fine golden butter is sent to Paris, and even London—how far off London seemed from the forest of Chinon!

We were greeted on our return by a group of Sisters at the convent gate, anxious to see what new surprise we had prepared for them. After the turkeys they were prepared for anything.

The French nun is a curious combination, for while fully recognising, with her native practical common sense, the limitations of the probable, she also admits, with all the fervour of her religious faith, the limitless bounds of the possible. Aunt Anne was beginning to rank in their minds as a woman capable of any remarkable deed, not yet qualified for the halo perhaps, but still on the heroic lines of Ste. Geneviève and Ste. Catherine of Siena. Had she, instead of blackberries, brought home the body of their enemy Monsieur Combes, bound and gagged, it would have been quite a deed in harmony with their exalted estimate of her character. Since, however, our offerings were but the fruits of the earth, we met with joyful acclaims and childlike glee.

Bearing our gifts of blackberries, sugar, and cream, we were accompanied by an escort of Sisters to the *parloir* of the Mère Générale. Everything goes first through her hands—letters, parcels, and presents—but

her rule is a gentle one. The *parloir* is a simple, austere little room, one end of which is divided off by a *grille*, and a dark green curtain can be drawn across the *grille* when a penitent would remain unseen. A few books lay on the table, a Church history and Lives of the Saints, a picture of Pius IX. A big crucifix hung on the walls, there were two wooden arm chairs sternly discouraging to luxurious ease, a footstool, and nothing more.

THE
"PAR-
LOIR."

The reverend Mother entered, and we lay our offerings at her feet, there being nowhere else to put them. She smiled benevolently and thanked us. Aunt Anne begged that the *dames pensionnaires* might not be allowed to devour all, since it was for the Sisters we had gathered these blackberries.

The old lady laughed at the earnestness of her request, and promised that everyone should share fairly in the feast.

"It is fifty years ago since I roamed in the forest of Chinon and gathered these berries!" she said. "How strangely the sight of them brings back my days of youth." The old eyes were gazing on the blackberries as on the face of a long-lost friend. It was infinitely pathetic to think that here were her native woods, but a short walk from the convent gate, yet closed to her for fifty years as completely as though divided by the ocean.

* * * * *

The blackberries and cream had a distinctly mellowing effect upon our fellow *pensionnaires*. For some time past we had been growing unpopular with the old dames, and becoming quite unwillingly the objects of jealousy and envy. The large *demoiselle* in special regarded us with strong disfavour in the corner of her

SMILES
AND
SCOWLS.

eye. Birds of passage, interlopers, and heretics to boot, that we were! Yet we walked and talked not only with the Sisters, but, scandalous to say, with Monsieur l'Abbé Lagrange. For that first talk had led to others, though the Abbé, I had noticed, cleverly avoided the arm-in-arm walk by sitting down all the time. He chose, too, the shadiest spots, but the lynx-eyed dames had detected him.

Another special cause of aggravation was the dish of potatoes and a jug of milk supplied to Aunt Anne at each meal in place of meat and wine. Ignoring any rights on her part, the two old ladies who sat as presiding chiefs at the table, would order the Sister to hand them the dish directly she had helped herself, and savagely snap up all that remained. It was high time we propitiated them in some way, and the jug of cream seemed to find its way straight to their hearts.

After dinner Madame de Nozières declared to me that she had always preferred the English to the Germans. Those were in truth detestable, but the English, if you took the patience to know them, had good qualities. Oh yes, one could not deny it, in spite of possessing an unsympathetic exterior and eccentric manners, they were sincere and generous *au fond*.

"We must keep up that character," said Aunt Anne; "next time we will order a bigger jug of cream. Under that cover, so to speak, I believe I might walk again arm-in-arm with Monsieur l'Abbé." She has the lovable inconsistency of liking an atmosphere of approval, and much prefers the smiles to the scowls even of *dames pensionnaires*, though not for one moment permitting their disapproval to affect her actions.

That same evening we received a state visit from the Mère Sous-Prieure. Like some pale ghost of bygone

days she glided in, bringing us each a souvenir from the Mère Générale, two large pictures of the convent, prints evidently from the same original as the wool-work picture at Tours, and with the same little saint presiding over the house from his seat in the clouds.

We did not mention this gift to the *dames pensionnaires* lest it should turn the cream sour.

* * * * *

The life of a nun even on the top of a hill in Touraine may be as strenuous and full of occupation as that of a municipal councillor. Certainly it was so in the case of our good Sisters.

WORK
OF THE
NUNS.

With the *Angelus* bell at five o'clock in the morning their day began, and they rose from their small, hard, white-curtained beds. The *Angelus* rings three times a day, at five a.m., mid-day, and at five p.m. At the sound every nun bows her head, as the peasants in Millet's picture, and repeats to herself the *Angelus* prayer. By half past five all were assembled in the convent chapel for the morning oraison, a service of meditation, held in absolute silence, the subject having been announced the evening before at the eight o'clock office.

These two services, at the opening and close of each day, are very typical and suggestive of the nuns' life. In silence and in darkness the black-robed figures meet behind the iron *grille* while all the world sleeps. The faint lamplight in the choir makes the shadows and the silence deeper. One office is said in low, subdued tones, which echo mysteriously through the empty church, the other is a meditation held in an absolute stillness which may be felt. The Sisters conduct both these services themselves,

CONVEN-
TUAL DIS-
CIPLINE.

Monsieur l'Aumonier finding it quite sufficient discipline for his soul to commence the day with the six o'clock mass.

The Sisters break their fast about seven o'clock with a little soup and piece of bread, and then each goes off to her own work. There are many kinds of service, and the Mère Générale ordains the one she considers best for each of her daughters—best from the spiritual point of view, that is. This often results in the poor nuns doing the thing they most dislike and being made to renounce by way of self-discipline the work for which they are obviously most fitted.

The little primrose-faced Sister who performed the "table service" for instance, confessed to me that she loved waiting on the sick; but, little though one could have guessed it, she had no heart for the work appointed to her and at which she had now been kept four years. Any day, of course, it might be changed, but on the other hand it might continue another ten years, one never knew. And there was the Sœur Angélique, whose whole soul sickened at the sight of blood and wounds, sent to the hospital at Chinon, when she would have thankfully done "table service" or even dug in the garden. The lay Sisters are told off for work in the garden, the *basse cour*, the laundry and the kitchen, superintended always by a cloistered Sister. The novices and white-veiled postulants, those arrived within six months, help in every kind of work, and their service is characterised by an enthusiastic keenness.

The *pensionnaires, messieurs et dames*, employ many hands and supply an excellent discipline for the soul. Several have been in the convent over thirty years and are of a fabulous age. Three of the

old gentlemen are over ninety, yet owing to the nuns' good care are hale and hearty still. Two of the old ladies are now very frail and have a Sister to wait on them day and night, but none pay more than a merely nominal sum, the average being from £40 to £50 a year. Eighty is considered merely an ordinary ripe age for a *pensionnaire*, but many of the nuns die between thirty and forty, even younger.

FRIENDS
IN NEED.

Besides the work inside the convent, including the *pensionnaires*, the house-work, kitchen-work, needle-work, farm work and garden, the constant services of the chapel, and nursing in the hospitals, the nuns have pensioners over the whole country side. These come to be assisted in all times of sickness and distress, both of soul and body. One Sister undertakes the making and distribution of clothes, another of food and medicine, while their advice and sympathy are called upon from the cradle to the grave. No wonder the country people groan over the expulsion of their best friends, often their only friends.

Aunt Anne became very intimate with several families in the little village, and wherever she went heard only praise of *les bonnes sœurs*. She loved to go out alone on foraging expeditions to buy grapes, pears and plums, and would invariably return having made delightful new friends and having had "Oh, my dear, such an interesting time!" Then as a special favour I was introduced, and as the niece of Madame found myself welcomed at once with open arms and given a free *entrée* to vineyard and orchard. The children were generally the first link—Bérénice, the two-year-old sovereign who reigned supreme at the dairy, and the "unique" son of our laundress, adored of three generations, not unfitly named Charlemagne, also

THE
VIRGIN'S
GARDEN.

Gabrielle, the cherub at the farm. The grandmother of the latter grew peaches and pears of ambrosial quality. She and her husband worked large vineyards on the half profit system for a patron. They shewed us invariably most kindly hospitality, insisting on our accepting large baskets of their fruit. It was only by the most astute diplomacy one was able to repay these generous people. We had to accept their gifts and be careful to let a sufficient time elapse before we in our turn made a little present. One hears the French described as a nation of *sous-lovers*, this certainly does not apply to the people of Touraine, they always seemed to find it more blessed to give than to receive.

But to return to the convent. One peaceful, radiant Sunday the Sœur Économe, finding me alone in the garden, approached, and in a mysterious whisper, dreading no doubt to be overheard by a *dame pensionnaire*, asked if I would like to visit with her the "jardin de Marie," the nuns' private garden. She had obtained permission from the Reverend Mother, but it was deemed expedient that my aunt and I should go separately so as to attract the least attention possible, the proceeding being a most unusual one, such grace having so far been granted to no other *pensionnaires*.

We passed stealthily through the little gate, which we found locked this time, and entered the nuns' enclosure. A large, mild figure of the Virgin greeted us under the trees. The Sœur Économe paused and crossed herself, with a few low words. She raised her eyes to the face of the statue with a look of rapt devotion and adoration, then turned to me.

"Ah, how the thought of her ever-present love and

care beautifies for us each hour of the day and sanctifies the humblest work. Here in her garden I seem to feel her presence closer even than in the chapel—but this, perhaps, I should not say.”

WISDOM
OF THE
DOVES.

“God made gardens and man made chapels,” I said, trying to reassure her. “I have always felt the woods and gardens easier to pray in than the churches.”

“Oh, la la, but this is very bad what you say there,” laughed the Sister, “and not at all what I meant. I would make you a good Catholic, and behold you are making me a bad Protestant heretic. We must both do penance; come, follow me underground.”

Let no one think that a French nun gives up her light heart and ceases to be a Frenchwoman on taking the veil. Her gay, cheery spirit continues, always ready to bubble up through the blackest, dreariest draperies, and her shrewd, practical sense often stands her in good stead in outwitting her foes, as the anti-clerical authorities have found on more than one occasion. As when, for instance, they suddenly swooped down and confiscated a certain pretty little property belonging to the *Sacré Cœur* and found to their disappointment that all the nice furniture had vanished, only a few old sticks remaining, and the vineyards they hoped to find full were bare of all but leaves, though it was three weeks before the usual *vendange*.

I followed the *Sœur Économe* down some little steps into a small underground chapel. Here beneath the altar were found four ancient sarcophagi, containing the sacred bones of the saints—*Louans*, *Salique*, *Lachie*, and *Corémar*, now reposing in the crypt of the convent chapel. Great was the joy of

PRICELESS
BONES.

the nuns when the sacred bodies of these renowned saints were discovered in their own garden of Marie, the holy bones being to them as a Monte Christo treasure to a miser. This convent is built on the site of the former *abbaye* of St. Florent, and in the *cartulaire rouge* of that *abbaye*, about fifty years ago, an old record was discovered to the effect that in the sixteenth century, to save them from desecration during the wars of religion, the bodies of the saints had been removed from the crypt, where they had rested over six hundred years, and been hidden beneath the altar. Under the direction of the Sisters researches were made, therefore, for the site of the ancient chapel, and to their unspeakable edification behold the success of their labours.

From the Sisters' garden, with its discreet little paths among shady trees and borders of homely, old-fashioned flowers, I was conducted to the crypt to be introduced to the ancient saints in person. There they lay, the four enormous stone sarcophagi, defying time and all the destroying elements it brings in its train. Inscribed inside the lids had been discovered the names and dates of the saints. How long will they remain in this dim odour of sanctity, and what will be their next experience, I wonder?

From the crypt we came up into the sunshine of the busy *basse cour*. In their various sheds and corners dwelt the two old horses, the cows, the pigs, and the chickens. In one outhouse the wood was kept, in another the fodder for the animals. Here were also the laundry, the dairy, and the kitchen, while on the floor above one caught a glimpse of the nuns' small whitewashed cells, a white curtained bed, and a crucifix on the wall.

Another door there was opening on this many-sided *basse cour*. We paused before it, and the Sœur Économe lowered her voice.

REQUIES-
CAT IN
PAGE.

"Would you like to enter here, or would it cause you too much emotion?" she asked. "This is our cemetery, where our bodies repose when we have accomplished the life on this earth."

I assured her the emotion I should feel would not certainly be fear, or one to do me any harm, and we descended three or four steps into a large cave, well-aired and lighted by the sunshine, which came in readily from the always open door. The cave was filled with mounds of earth, at the head of each a plain black wooden cross, bearing the name and date of the Mother or Sister whose worn-out body had been laid to rest. Many crosses bore two or even three names, for the little cemetery is becoming crowded.

The dates showed sometimes very short lives—aged "twenty-six" and "twenty-eight" and "thirty-one" for instance. Many among these, said the Sœur Économe, had died of pneumonia and bronchitis, which looks as though the austere little white cells, possessing no means of heating in winter, were answerable for something. A few wreaths of *immortelles* and evergreen hung on the walls of the cave, but no flowers, no blade of grass broke the uniformity of these bare graves of brown earth, or marked with more favour one than another. Even in death the Sisters retain nothing as individuals, even in death they sternly renounce all beauty save that of the soul.

It is impossible to keep beauty out of God's world, however; like love *es kommt doch*, in spite of the sincere but mistaken efforts of poor groping humanity who think in renouncing His best gifts to draw closer

**THE FOR-
BIDDEN
FRUIT.**

to the Giver. So long as the birds sing and the flowers bloom in the convent garden, and the sun of Touraine rises and sets in the valley of the Vienne, so long will the gentle Sisters have their lives flooded with beauty, whether they will or no.

I did my utmost also to introduce a little of this forbidden fruit into the convent chapel by giving some music to the Sœur Célestine, who officiates as organist and sacristan.

One day, in the refectory, I discovered an ancient spinet-like piano, used generally as a sideboard. The quaint old tinkling sounds drew the Sœur Célestine to me like a magnet. It was the first time she had emerged from the distant group of those Sisters we saw only behind the grille in the chapel. Music was to her as a loved mother's tongue in which she was perforce dumb. Once as a child she had heard an opera, she told me. It was secular music of course, with "the stain of earth's passions upon it," but if this had seemed to open to her the gates of Paradise, what must the heavenly music be like? She had never heard of the great classical masters, the sacred composers, whose works would have been permitted even to a nun. Since entering the convent at seventeen no note of music save that of the chapel had met her ear. And the convent chapel possessed nothing save a few books of Plain Song, and canticles giving only one voice bare of all harmonies. For these latter one had to trust to the inspiration of the organist, with exactly the disastrous result that may be imagined. The spinet's feeble echo of some of the great oratorio solos, "Oh rest in the Lord," "He shall feed His flock," etc., caused her a rapture that was pathetic. Presently other Sisters looked in, and someone, as in

duty bound, informing the Mère Générale of what was going on, she herself appeared on the scene. I stopped with an apology.

A CON-
VENT
LOVE-
SONG.

"Continue, continue, my daughter," she begged. "The music makes me much joy and you have the fingers which sing."

Under her auspices I launched out boldly into the music of earth—ancient folk lore suited the old piano best, cradle songs, battle songs and Irish laments, and, above all, love songs, but I discreetly harmonised these, giving a stained-glass-window effect which made even the "Snowy-breasted Pearl" and "Annie Laurie" sound as if written for an "offertoire."

Anyone attending the convent service now on Sunday morning is equally liable to hear the sweet, sad strains of "Shule Agra" or the severely Protestant "Old Hundredth." The Mère Générale preferred the former and begged me to include it in the little MS. collection I wrote out for Sœur Célestine's use—"it spoke to the heart for it came straight from the heart," in all innocence she affirmed.

Never was a more delightfully human old lady than the Mère Générale. One Sunday I brought my kodak into the garden and obtained her permission to take her photograph. Assisted by an eager crowd of Sisters I posed her in different positions—at the head of a procession of nuns, placing flowers before her favourite shrine in the garden, and finally, much to her amusement, arm-in-arm with Aunt Anne. But this the latter found lacking in respect, and to counteract the effect insisted on a more becoming pose in which she knelt before the reverend Mother receiving her blessing.

The Sunday *quart d'heure* in the large garden was prolonged by special dispensation, and we met

A NEW
MÈRE.

again our friends Sœurs Radegonde, Ermintrude, Marie-Marthe and Angélique.

Aunt Anne discussed with the Mère Générale the advisability of reforms in the convent system and the treatment of *dames pensionnaires*, whose souls she found neglected for their bodies. Her suggestions called forth such admiration that the reverend Mother begged she would remain and join their Order. "You have character and force of intellect, Madame—a strong spirit like yours would raise our Order to power and life once more. Come to us and I will, at the end of a year, cede you my place," promised the mother, laughing and yet half in earnest.

"To criticise is not to execute, dear Mother," said Aunt Anne. "Remember your own wise proverb: *Le mauvais vin fait de très bon vinaigre*."*

But the Mère Générale emphatically repudiated all idea of Aunt Anne being vinegar. She was "the best of wine, a healthy tonic, an invigorating breeze, perhaps even might she develop into a two-edged sword in the hands of the Church!" A chorus of Sisters echoed approval, and crowded round begging Aunt Anne to become one of them—she had the true vocation, they were sure she had!

Aunt Anne agreed with the Sisters that the life conventual would suit her exactly, but declined resolutely the offer of the reverend Mother to take her office. She promised, however, to return before long to this sweet spot, for never had she found a place in which it would be so sweet to end her days.

Just then Sœur Marie-Marthe and the Sœur Économe came towards us with a white-veiled postulant. Seeing the Mère Générale still talking

* Bad wine makes very good vinegar.

with us they hesitated, but the Mother called to the girl, "Advance, my daughter; you desire, I know, to be presented to our dear friends, these English ladies, if they will permit it."

A NEW
POSTU-
LANT.

The little novice seemed very shy, but her reserve broke down before Aunt Anne's easy friendliness. "So you have chosen this beautiful and devoted life before even tasting of the world's pleasures, my child, for you are surely very young," she said.

The girl assured her she was already four-and-twenty, however. It struck me the group of Sisters appeared unusually interested in the conversation, hanging on every word that passed between Aunt Anne and the novice, and when, taking the girl's arm and walking on ahead, the latter said, "Tell me all about it, my dear. If you so greatly desire to choose this life, where is the difficulty?" I distinctly saw the reverend Mother wink at the *Sœur Économe*.

Like a flash of light that wink revealed to me the truth. Gertruda! Gertruda it was whose pious, but alas! deceptive little face, the postulant's white cap and veil enshrined. No wonder she spoke so carefully and low, carrying out well the part of modest, retiring convent flower. Her accent was sufficiently good not to betray her to any but a French person.

"You have snatched a brand from the burning," I observed solemnly to the reverend Mother. "Gertruda makes an admirable little *religieuse*."

"It made such pleasure to these children to play this little comedy, I could not withhold my consent," answered the old lady, smiling benignly: "*Le bon Dieu* loves to see the young people happy and amusing themselves in innocence. You understand the habit of the postulant has not as yet been consecrated;

IN
SHEEP'S
CLOTHING.

it is therefore quite different from that of the Sister ; and who knows," she added, "but what that dear child may acquire the taste for wearing always the religious robe, having once put it on."

"Will you, Madame, give me your consent and blessing when I take the final vows," said Gertruda to her mistress, with downcast eyes.

"Certainly, my dear child, if you desire it, though why you should be speaking to me as though I were the Mère Générale instead of a perfect stranger and a heretic, I cannot conceive. However, I feel sure you have chosen well—may you be a comfort and blessing to the dear reverend Mother, and having made up your mind, do not listen to anyone who would draw you back to the world. Evidently you have a real vocation, so God bless you, my child."

(I gasped as I thought of Gertruda's path strewn with the hearts of chauffeurs, chefs and couriers.)

This speech was greeted by the Sisters with a burst of rippling, delighted laughter, which caused Aunt Anne to look round uneasily. In the same moment the Sœur Économe advanced, and quickly removing the white cap and veil revealed to her astonished gaze the neat, fair little head of Gertruda.

No one enjoyed the joke more than Aunt Anne. Gertruda, overtaken with sudden shame, vanished among the trees, and when we next met her looked as innocent as if she had never heard of a postulant, though she confessed to me in private that were it not for her gracious lady and her invalid mother and someone to whom she had given "a sort of promise," there was no life she would so gladly lead as that of a nun in this convent.

* * * * *

Too soon came a day of sad good-byes which we tried to mitigate by *au revoirs*.

OUR
VILLAGE
FRIENDS.

We began early in the morning with farewell visits to our village friends. There was our laundress and her baby Charlemagne, whose portrait I took in his best sabots with the family pig by his side, and another with his old *grand'mère* in her charming Touraine cap, and Bérénice at the dairy, so content with her red shoes, she was ready to bid a most cheerful adieu to the giver. From there we went on to our friend of the vineyards and peach trees, where queens it another baby, the fascinating, cherub-faced two-year-old Gabrielle, about whom the whole family revolve like planets around their sun. We found all at home, the old lady, the *chef de famille*, busy in her *basse cour* as usual, for she prides herself on never sitting down even to a meal, her husband and son, the latter just returned from his twenty-eight days' military service, taking a stand-up *déjeuner* in the kitchen, in most uncomfortable fashion according to English ideas. The old man was hacking up a gigantic loaf about four feet long. I remarked that it looked excellent bread, but he shook his head.

"The meal we give to the baker is good enough," he said, "but the bakers they rob us, they mix *un tas de choses* and put it in place of our flour—the brigands! In my youth it was better; each one baked his own bread—ah, that was the real good stuff!"

In the vineyard we found Gabrielle and her mother. Before her marriage the latter was a lady's maid in Paris, and sighs sometimes for the boulevards. "I figure to myself the gay shops while I walk between the vines," she laughed with a little break in her

voice, "but one accustoms oneself," she added philosophically.

Laden with parting gifts of grapes, peaches, and pears, we returned to the convent and commenced our long series of *adieux*, which continued more or less for three hours—a harrowing time, for they had to be repeated in most cases twice and even three times, until it was time for us to go.

The Mère Générale, accompanied by the Mère Sous-Prieure joined us in the garden. We sat and talked in our favourite *bosquet* overlooking the valley. The dear old Mother seemed very sad; she said no novices were joining the religious Orders, the risk of all property being seized was now too great, and the parents feared to give *dots*. She had just opened a house in Italy, a place of refuge to which to flee in case of necessity. At her invitation we went into the nuns' garden. Here some fifteen of the Sisters joined us, and all standing round the statue of the mild, benignant "Sainte Vierge," the Mère Générale offered up a prayer, very simple and earnest, the nuns responding in chorus, "*Priez pour nous*"—"Ayez pitié de nous," and ending with the "*Ave Maria*!"

In spite of myself the tears filled my eyes. They were instantly detected by the sharp little brown eyes of Sœur Marie-Marthe, even in the midst of her devotions.

"*Ha, mais voilà une qui nous est gagné!*" she cried, pointing me out with remorseless triumph to the rest.

I protested laughing that I was not difficult to gain. My tears and sympathy were what they desired. But she clearly thought the next step in sequence was to take the veil after such an unquestionable demonstration of conversion!

The old black 'bus, with the old white horse, drove up to the convent door. Our baggage was piled on the top. The Mothers and Sisters assembled in the *cour d'honneur* and the final *adieux* were spoken. We parted with real sorrow, embracing all, beginning and ending with the Mère Générale. In the distance a group of *dames pensionnaires* waved an almost cordial *au revoir*, and near the chapel door the two Abbés and Monsieur l'Aumonier assembled to wish us a friendly *bon voyage*.

BACK TO
THE
WORLD.

A FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE.

A HIGH
PRIEST
INDEED.

THE crowning beauty of that ancient city of towers, churches, and palaces, once a favourite residence of the Kings of France, is the cathedral. The flying buttresses stretch out like wings in protection and blessing to the old buildings clustering round, and the two noble Renaissance towers rise high and straight into the clear blue sky like strong arms uplifted in prayer by this Mother-Church of the people for her children.

Many archbishops have filled the great carved throne of the cathedral, but only on one has the loving name been bestowed of *Père du peuple*. His is the presence that gives a living personality to the grand old cathedral. The two seem made for each other and typify one another, and both are accessible at all hours to the poorest and meanest, the sorrowfulest and the sinfulest of their children.

Standing at the high altar in his gorgeous purple robes or kneeling with joined hands, and eyes upraised in earnest intercession, this bishop looked indeed "a high priest unto the Lord," one set apart and consecrated to be, in so far as it is possible for one human being so to serve his fellows, a guide and torchbearer, a spiritual father. As in the case of Browning's Cardinal, "through such souls, God stooping, shows sufficient of His light for us in the dark to rise by."

It was so, in the mellow golden light of his cathedral, I saw him first, and the old legend of a halo surrounding the heads of the saints seemed no unlikely tale, such beneficent goodness and strength seemed to radiate from the noble though sad face.

THE
PEOPLE'S
FRIEND.

When the preacher mounted the pulpit, the archbishop, together with all the other officiating priests, came down and took their seats at the top of the chancel steps facing the congregation. "The father of his people" sat in the centre. The rows of faces on either side of him, *chanoines* and *curés*, were in curious contrast to his own. Hard, ambitious easy-going and jovial, careworn and anxious, every variety of type, but none with the halo. The *Archevêque*, wrapt in thought, seemed quite unconscious of his surroundings, and of being the centre figure; he had about him no suggestion of the "proud prelate." Gertruda, who was with me, remarked afterwards, "Ach, Fraulein, how like the Archangel Michael appeared the good archbishop surrounded by the spirits of the world, the flesh and the devil." Gertruda is an excellent judge of character.

In town, country, château, chaumière and market place, wherever we went we heard of the *Père du peuple*, and everyone had some personal experience to relate of the goodness of Monseigneur. His heart and his door, like that of the old cathedral close by, stand ever open to admit those who come. And though he puts aside a day twice a week to receive his people, they come at all hours and on all days, and all desire to be baptized, married and buried by him. One faithful watchdog he has who fain would protect him from this constant call on heart, brain and purse, the old Célestine, *gouvernante* or housekeeper, who

MONSEIG-
NEUR'S
WATCH-
DOG.

has been with him for twenty-five years and more. She remonstrates, scolds and threatens the old menace which brings but a wistful smile to the face of her monseigneur, "*Je m'en vais, puisque je ne puis rien, et monseigneur veut absolument se tuer.*" And he, excusing himself, answers always—

"My good Célestine, the world is so full of sorrow, if I can give a little joy, a little aid, to my poor children, must I not do it?" So Célestine has recourse to guile and protects her master where she can without his knowing it. We heard of Mademoiselle Célestine almost as often as of her master.

The "Father of his people" has lived always in France, and belongs to his country heart and soul; all his life he has served her, even following her stricken armies through the Franco-German war as military chaplain. Since the time of Fra Ugo Bassi no priest was ever so adored by the soldiers. They would have followed him to the cannon's mouth. He was their friend, the confidant of their griefs and joys. Many a letter he wrote to mother, wife, and sweetheart. Once, years after, when having become bishop of a maritime diocese, he was passing through the villages on a round of confirmation, a fisherman's wife accosted him and begged he would come and see her husband who was ill, for years ago he had known Monseigneur. He entered the little cottage, and there on the wall in a roughly carved frame, the only ornament in the place beside the fishing nets and copper saucepans, hung an old yellow letter. "*Ma bien aimée,*" it began. Something in the handwriting attracted the bishop's eye. "Ha, Monseigneur, he recognises the letter—yes?" said the fisherman's wife, her face radiant with pride and pleasure.

The bishop examined it more closely. His face grew more and more puzzled as he studied the writing of this sweet old love-letter, full of a simple, tender devotion, written by a soldier on the eve of a great battle to the girl he had left behind him, whom he might never see again in this world, but for whom he would wait till she joined him in the Paradise of God.

MONSEI-
GNEUR'S
LOVE-
LETTER.

"Tell me why I should recognise it, my daughter?" he asked.

"Because it was Monseigneur himself who wrote it. Ah, but Monseigneur it was who wrote the letters for all the brave boys at the war who knew not to write. It was he also who gave to them the courage to fight, and fortified them in the love to their country. My husband he made himself that frame for the letter, and we call it always 'The letter of Monseigneur.' For in truth my husband, the unhappy one, never has he written another letter in all his life save that one there which he wrote not. It made me great joy to receive it. I carried it always on my heart till he came back from the war—then we hung it on the wall there, and each child as he arrived, and there are ten of them well grown to-day, we taught to repeat a prayer for Monseigneur."

The bishop's eyes were dim as he looked again at the old letter he had penned a quarter of a century ago. He who was never to write any love-letter of his own, whose great, tender heart was to feel joy only in the joy of others, but to bear the weight of sorrows all his own, besides the burden of grief and care laid on him daily by his great family of "children in Christ."

* * * * *

"If all the priests had resembled our Archbishop never would those *messieurs*, Combes and Pelletan,
F.F. Q

THE SUN
UPON ICE.

have obtained any success against the Church, never would the people of France have suffered it," said Madame Bignon, as we sat taking our daily "five o'clock" in her lively tea-shop. "He is saint, our Monseigneur, yet he is, see you, much better than all the saints, for they make one to feel a sinner those there, while they remain in their sanctity far above you, like the stone figures in the niches outside the cathedral. But with Monseigneur it is not so; he approaches you, he takes you by the hand, and he understands so well, it is as though he possessed the heart of a mother. What I have dared to tell to Monseigneur it is really astonishing! One time I went to him in great trouble by cause of my husband whom I would divorce—I had the heart like marble. I returned home the heart all melted, as when the sun has shone upon ice. My faith, but he kills himself for us, does our good *archevêque*—never does he repose himself! He gives all he possesses. Mademoiselle Célestine, she commands always here the sweet dishes when Monseigneur receives company at the *archevêché*. I send the most fine I can produce in the hope that Monseigneur will himself partake. But to what good—the old Célestine she tells me he eats like a hermit in the wilderness, so little and so plainly."

From our driver we heard also of the "Father of his people."

"Ah, but there is one who merits the Paradise without one hour of purgatory! Imagine to yourselves, my ladies, what did Monseigneur the other day only. My son he desired greatly to obtain a position at the railway station, but many applied, and he had no one to speak for him, his late master being defunct, his poor mother also, she who arranged for all our children

their affairs. 'Hold,' I say to him, 'we go to Monseigneur, thou and I. He will perhaps write a little word for thee. I knew it was Monseigneur who had obtained permission for the old one who has a stall of fruit and cakes to sell inside the station, and so to gain her life. Had she herself not told me, the tears in the eyes! Good—so together we ring at the gate of the *archevêché*, my son and me. 'Enter,' cries the *concierge*. 'We would speak with Monseigneur,' I say. 'Mount by the grand staircase, the big door is open, and enter the salon on the first floor,' says that one. 'Monseigneur will come to you in your turn.' We enter—we mount, and there in the great salon are others who wait. In turn Monseigneur bids them approach, as he opens to them the door of his *cabinet de travail*. On seeing me and my son he gives us that good smile of his. 'Good day, my children,' he says. 'We regret to derange Monseigneur,' I begin, 'but it is an affair for us of much importance, and we pray your aid.' 'The good God has placed me here just for that purpose, my son,' he says, 'to give you my aid—recount to me your affair.' Think you Monseigneur he contents himself with writing a little word as I pray? But no, nothing less than this. He takes us both, my boy and me, there at once in his own carriage, which awaits him, to visit the '*chef de gare*.' 'A word spoken has more power than a word written,' says Monseigneur. That the *archevêque* himself should come and ask, made to the station chief so much pleasure, he gave to my son the vacant position. And now you will understand why one calls Monseigneur '*le Père du peuple*'!"

A FRIEND
IN NEED.

* * * * *

"It was Monseigneur who edited and launched my

VICTOR
HUGO'S
BISHOP.

book of the "Letters and Life of Père Didon," said a charming lady to whom we owed many pleasant hours in the old cathedral city. She had been telling us other good deeds of the Father of his people—done by the left hand and unknown to the right. "You must not leave without knowing our *archevêque*," she said.

"Well, it is the first time I have ever wished to know a prince of the Church," said Aunt Anne. "They are not in my line. But I acknowledge I should like to see this one."

We were taking a cup of tea with our friend. Bishops, cardinals and even popes happen to be very much indeed in her line. She knows them all, past and present; their portraits signed by their own hands cover the walls of her little study exhaling an odour of sanctity, but in quite a friendly way.

"I will present you with pleasure," she said. "I think you will not be out of his line. Monseigneur finds common ground on which he can meet everyone—oh, yes, heretics of all the varieties," she laughed—"the ground on which all human feet must tread."

"Your description recalls to me vividly Victor Hugo's bishop in 'Les Misérables,'" remarked Aunt Anne. "I always feared he was only to be found in fiction."

Our friend said the original of that portrait was supposed to be Monseigneur Dupanloup, the well-known Bishop of Orléans. "He also was a father of his people," she said. "And the story of the candlesticks, oh, that is true equally of both! Many a parallel to that incident I could tell you."

It was decided we would not go to the *archevêché* on a reception day, a private visit being of so much greater interest.

"He is always occupied. Every hour is claimed by someone — councils, services, functions, funerals. Never was a life so full, but he has time, nevertheless, for everyone who needs him. He will give us an hour. I shall see him write it down in his little book, and then it will be kept for us."

MONSEIGNEUR'S
STATE.

It seemed wicked to add to the weight of a life so burdened. Even though we were but straws, might we not be just those fatal last straws?

But on my reluctantly suggesting this our friend declared I need have no such scruple, since we should bring an element of change from the usual visitor who came to beg either for material or spiritual help. "But always it is that he may give—give—give. And that is what fatigues so greatly," she said.

A few days later we stood at the beautiful sculptured gateway of the *archevêché* to claim our promised hour. A little side door stood ajar. "Enter," cried a *concierge*, without going through the ceremony of leaving his lodge. "Monseigneur has just come in."

We entered the wide *cour d'honneur*. In the centre a gigantic cedar spread its stately branches to the edge of the grass *parterre*. At one of the windows sat a cheery-looking old dame in fresh white *bonnet* knitting busily.

She greeted us with a beaming smile. "Enter, enter, enter, my ladies." We enquired if there were "*du monde*" with Monseigneur. No, she said, he had but just returned from the funeral of an old servant at Marmoutin and was expecting us. Gabrielle would come round and show us in if we would mount the steps.

Another white-capped *bonne* met us at the big front doors, which stood already open. She also greeted us

THE
ABBEY
OR THE
MUSEUM.

in friendly fashion, and seeing with us an *habituée* of the place, told us to mount to the salon on the first floor, where we should surely find Monseigneur.

At the top of the stairs was a bell inscribed *valet de pied* but as yet no sign of such a being had appeared in the palace.

Monseigneur came forward to meet us: a tall, beneficent presence in a robe of kingly purple with broad sash and cuffs of scarlet, a costume admirably in keeping with the dignified, old-world atmosphere of the stately *archevêché*. His smile was a benediction before he uttered the words of blessing with which he greeted our friend as she kissed his hand. She presented us. He shook hands in most cordial welcome, and I felt at once as though he were a friend refound, one who had suddenly emerged out of some dim, long-forgotten past.

"Alas that I know not English," he said. "Your Shakespeare, I admire him so much, yet my ignorance obliges me to read only a translation. This poor old head is too tired and too stupid to learn!"

Aunt Anne told him he must come to London—her patriotism makes her think this indispensable to the welfare of all those unfortunate millions not born in our favoured islands.

"There is one thing I greatly desire to see in your London—can you guess what it is, Mademoiselle?" he turned to me.

"Westminster Abbey," I suggested, thinking that the most suitable resort for an Archbishop.

"No," he shook his head. "You must try again."

But I failed again with the new Catholic cathedral.

"She insists on keeping me in a church," he laughed, "while I desire to go to a museum of antiquities. Is

that not quite as suitable for an old antiquity as I am? Ah, but I should like much to visit your Museum of London and see those Greek sculptures of the Parthenon—the treasures of Egypt and Nineveh. How wonderful is that great past of art and of religion!’

AUNT
ANNE'S
TRUE
COLOURS

“No fear of not finding plenty of common ground with him,” said Aunt Anne, aside, and as we walked on together through the long suite of public rooms she announced that she had herself “always greatly preferred museums to churches.”

On the Archbishop explaining, with a distinct twinkle in his eye, that this was not precisely his position, Aunt Anne confessed herself boldly to be a Freethinker, saying “she must not walk and talk with an Archbishop under false colours.”

But he did not seem shocked as she feared. Truth to tell, I do not think he saw much difference between a Freethinker and a Protestant—Protestants, as they insist in designating members of the Anglican Church in France, being identified in the French Catholic mind with Lutherans, Jews and all heretics outside the fold. He only looked at her rather sadly and said, “My daughter, we are all children of the great Father, by whatever name we call ourselves. When you hear His voice you will listen and, follow, is it not so? You will not refuse to listen, of that I am sure. To walk by the light the good God gives us, that is all He asks of any one. The voice of duty seems sometimes the only one we can hear, but a day comes when we hear in it also the voice of the Father.”

A beautiful little statue of Jeanne d’Arc stood on a table in one of the salons. It was modern, but had a touch of real inspiration which arrested one. This

JEANNE'S
"VOICES."

favourite heroine of France, of all figures in history perhaps the most remarkable and attractive, presented as it is to us, so clearly, so vividly alive, owing to the minute records of the "process of rehabilitation," which took place only twenty years after her death, that in spite of nearly six hundred years, we can almost hear her clear, fresh young voice, almost look into the pure, far-seeing eyes.

"I am glad you love her," said the *archevêque* : "To me this little figure represents the true Jeanne, which so few of the countless pictures and statues succeed in doing—a young girl, very simple and unlearned, yet full of a wisdom which astounded the most wise, a dauntless courage, and a soul so white, it dazzled as the sun at noon-day. In this little figure we see her advancing at the head of her troops, listening to the Voice, and following where it leads, heedless of all else."

I asked whether he thought Jeanne heard an actual voice.

"Without doubt," he answered. "One must remember the soul has ears and eyes as well as the body, and of a finer quality and power. How else can the marvel be accounted for, that a peasant girl of seventeen years was, according to the testimony of the generals who fought under her command, the greatest military genius of her day, showing a perfect knowledge of tactics and strategy. Only when they refused to follow her counsel did the French troops experience failure."

"But alas, the Voice failed her in the hour of her greatest need," remarked my friend, sadly. "How to explain that?"

"It was not the hour of her nation's greatest need,

remember. The mission was accomplished," said the *archevêque*. "Like her divine Master, she had to pass through the same hour of darkness as when He cried, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' but the sun was behind the cloud all the time, and the dark hour passed."

TRIAL OF
LA
PUCELLE.

Aunt Anne agreed that that evidence of the Generals was certainly very strong. "I have known a good many Generals—dear, delightful, gallant gentlemen too," she said, "but never observed in any a weak tendency to underrate their own judgment, and doubtless Generals are pretty much the same all the world over.

The Archbishop pointed out two big volumes on the table, a Life of "La Pucelle d'Orléans," by Vallon.

I opened it just at the trial scene, where the infamous Bishop Cauchon of Beauvais (I always feel inclined to spell his name Cochon!), the judges, lawyers, and priests are all uniting in trying to make this shepherd girl of eighteen commit herself to some heresy or contradiction. Each question and reply of this trial is recorded word for word, and it is marvellous to read the answers of Jeanne, so direct and straightforward, yet showing such penetrating insight into the character and motives of her accusers that she both baffled and exasperated them.

I closed the book reluctantly, and we continued our progress through the long suite of reception rooms, where Monseigneur pointed out everything of interest. The bedroom of Napoleon with his dominating "N" and swarm of bees on tapestries and curtains, the great hall of conference, which seats five hundred people, with the throne at the end, where the Archbishop sits and presides over the councils, and the gallery of portraits of past *archevêques*, on the whole a pompous,

A
"CABINET
DE TRAVAIL."
VAIL."

dull-looking set, but of course this may have been the fault of the artists, not the sitters:

One specially hard-featured old gentleman attracted Aunt Anne's attention. She remarked that his eyes followed her with an expression so disapproving and vindictive, he looked as if he would like to have her burnt.

"Not perhaps you alone, dear Madame—me also," laughed the Archbishop, "and for conscience sake, very surely for conscience sake, let us not forget."

There were some fine old missals and illuminated books, but nothing, except the little Jeanne d'Arc and a copy of Tissot's "Life of Christ," belonging to the Archbishop himself. It was not till he invited us to enter his private sanctum, his *cabinet de travail*, that we saw any sign of his personal tastes or possessions, and these were of the simplest and fewest, chiefly books, old and new. "These are my friends, some of my best friends," he said, looking at them lovingly. His keen artistic sense showed itself, however, in a beautiful little replica of the *Ange pleurant* of Amiens Cathedral, some quaint old paintings on glass, and a fine old carved wooden Madonna, special favourites he had himself collected.

A secretary entered with a roll of papers, and asked for instructions. "He is my hands, and often my memory as well," said Monseigneur, smiling on him.

No one treats the Archbishop with awe—that smile of his precludes the possibility, and places him at once in the category of God's good gifts.

We had just a glimpse, however, of one person who fully realised what was due to a prince of the Church, and represented in himself all the dignity and state of

the Roman hierarchy—this was no other than Monseigneur's valet, Monsieur Félix, the keeper of his gorgeous apparel, and the careful guardian of his person. A few dignified, respectful words about a train to Bourges, whither Monseigneur was going to visit his brother Archbishop, and the necessity of the carriage conveying Monseigneur to the station in good time, and he was gone, but leaving behind him a sense of there being one in that palace determined to uphold somewhat of its ancient state and splendour.

THE
VALET OF
MONSEI-
GNEUR.

Everything interests the "Father of his people," everything amuses him. There was a little battle at the door of the garden as to whether he would put on his hat. My friend insisted the wind had turned cold, there had been a shower of rain; to go without a hat would be folly. It ended in victory for the lady, who settled the matter by starting off to find the hat herself. How Monsieur Félix would have viewed such a proceeding I tremble to think. Fortunately a hat was found close at hand.

Monseigneur took us to his favourite haunts. There is a high raised terrace shaded by a double avenue of planes where he loves to walk in the evening as he recites his breviary. From here you look down on the palace gardens on one side and over the red roofs of the town on the other. At the end is a corner in the wall, formerly the watchman's post, commanding the whole city.

We descended to the gardens, and Monseigneur took us to the pond where he feeds his pet ducks, Madagascans. They crowded round him, loudly demanding food.

"Just now they are not in beauty—they can make no proud display, poor fellows; all their feathers are

THE
BIRDS'
PARADISE

falling. Go, my poor friends, hide yourselves in the pond," he advised them in a gentle, bantering tone such as St. Francis must have used with his feathered friends. The birds evidently understood, and turned huffily away.

"This is my concert room," he said, showing us a clump of trees which shut in a little green arbour. "Here the birds sing always! Winter and summer someone keeps up the song of joy and praise like the lights which burn always before the altar."

And just then, to confirm the words of their master, as we entered quietly, a lovely solo from a thrush was going on.

I declared I could not imagine a happier existence than that of a bird in the palace garden.

"Ah, even here, my daughter," he warned me, laughing, "La Félicité would encounter the devil in the shape of Célestine's big cat. For no one, not even the birds of my garden, is this world the Paradise."

He has a special love for the big cedar in the *cour d'honneur*, and made us stand near the trunk to realise the size, the branches being over eighteen metres long, and six thousand five hundred people able to be sheltered beneath it. A second cathedral this cedar tree, a second archbishop!

Before leaving, we descended to the kitchen to pay our respects to Madame Célestine, whom we had seen at the window. She has been twenty-five years with Monseigneur, and rules him with autocratic hand, holding over him continually the awful threat "*Je m'en vais*." A keen sense of humour and considerable shrewdness characterise her comely old face, the latter quality, no doubt, developed by the

necessity of protecting Monseigneur from the "worth-naughts" who would despoil him.

THE
ARCHE-
VÊCHÉ
KITCHEN.

"He believes in all—he listens to all they recount and he gives everything he possesses. Monseigneur has the heart too good—it is his weakness," pronounced Madame Célestine with a sigh. "Me, I scold him strongly, but what will you? He repeats the same thing again to-morrow—he kills himself for his poor."

The kitchen was a vast hall with arched roof. Rows of bright copper pots and pans shone on the walls. We were introduced to Mathilde the cook. I wish we could have seen a good meal preparing for Monseigneur, but Aunt Anne declared afterwards that the only sign of anything cooking was a little milk on a charcoal stove, the big range being silent. Mathilde must have an easy time.

Before making our *adieux* to the Archbishop he insisted we must come and see him again, and visit the garden whenever we wished. I must not wait to become a thrush! "You and I, my daughter," he said, "we must talk again of Jeanne d'Arc, whom we both love, yes?" I agreed gladly, and begged to be allowed some day to take his photograph on the terrace with the great towers of the cathedral rising up behind him. He took out the little book and arranged day and hour. "Others will be there perhaps, but we will manage to find a little quiet quarter of an hour alone," he promised.

As for Aunt Anne—she who had begun the afternoon by affirming archbishops to be out of her line, and her convictions those of a Freethinker—kissing the hand of our host like the devoutest of his children, she besought his blessing and announced that she felt very like becoming a good Catholic on the spot.

LOURDES
OR MECCA.

This was the first of several visits we paid to our *archevêque*, as we called him from this time. Aunt Anne's conversion was a somewhat intermittent process, her moods are so many and her sympathies so wide. She has quite decided on a pilgrimage to Lourdes for next year, but I think the Archbishop feels it is by no means certain that she may not go to Mecca the year following.

THE CHILDREN'S PURGATORY.

AUNT ANNE is keenly interested in every philanthropic and educational scheme. Not that this covers the area of her interest, which extends over everything touching human life, from the baking of bread to the last uses of radium. But the young of all species are her speciality, and to see a home for children or a chicken farm she would cross a continent.

HOME
OF THE
"BADLY
TURNED."

This was why we drove over one day to see the *colonie*, or reformatory for boys. The day before, whilst buying photographs and picture postcards with which to slake the insatiable thirst of a certain young person in England who requires every step taken by her Aunt Anne to be paved with picture postcards, our friend Monsieur Blanchard, the stationer, showed us a picturesque building which he explained belonged to the *colonie* or home for boys who had "turned badly" or been deserted by their parents. The two offences appeared to be synonymous. There was a large farm and vineyard on which the boys worked, their time being thus divided between healthy outdoor exercise and school.

"Admirable!" cried Aunt Anne. "Just my idea for children of all classes, whether they have turned badly or well, poor little things. They love work, though they hate study, and work makes them healthy and happy. You remember," she turned to me, "how William Morris carried out this idea in his delightful

IDEAL
LIFE FOR
CHILDREN.

little story, "News from Nowhere," making the children help the builders, coachmen, gardeners and everyone. We will go and see over this *colonie* to-morrow," she decided promptly.

"Forget not also to visit the 'Maison Paternelle,'" said M. Blanchard. "Madame will find it very interesting. It is an admirable institution on the estate of the *colonie* for boys of rich parents who fail to learn at school."

"Excellent idea," said Aunt Anne; "there are so many poor little fellows who get left behind at school. Yes, I am sure it will prove most interesting. I like the name Paternal House—just what it should be!"

I did not understand at the time why Monsieur Blanchard gave such a funny, whimsical little smile.

"One can see well that Madame has much heart," was all he said, however, in his most complimentary tones as he bowed us out of the shop.

We drove off to the *colonie* accordingly the following day, thinking no evil.

It was the first ugly drive we had taken in Touraine—flat, treeless country, ugly, dusty roads—no sign of river or forest far as eye could reach—the vines growing by the hedgeless roadsides covered with dust. It was a fitting preparation for what lay before us, in spite of the fact that the village of the *colonie*, as they call it, was bright and picturesque.

As we passed the group of cottages with their gay little flower gardens we enquired if it was not there the children were boarded out in families, but our driver said no, the *colonie* was half a mile further on. We drove up to a large group of buildings—the *employés'* homes, we afterwards heard—quite attractive from the outside, and got out at the

porter's lodge, where a *gardien* came forward to show us over, it being visiting day.

BUMBLE
AS A
FATHER.

Our companions were a smart lady who drove up in her carriage and pair, a motherly-looking body wearing the Touraine country-woman's cap, a man and his wife of the *petit bourgeois* class, with their small boy—the latter evidently taken for a moral lesson rather than a pleasure party—and a young man armed with a notebook.

Built round a large, square enclosure were a number of houses of stern, forbidding aspect, each bearing the inscription over the door, "Famille A.," B., or C. Our guide invited us to enter one of these, explaining it was his house and family, and contained some thirty to forty of the youngest boys. The *colonie* is entirely for boys. They are admitted from the age of eight years, and usually remain till they enter the army, unless they manage to run away or to die, or (a rare contingency) till they are freed before the end of the term by a parent or guardian so anxious for the absent one's society that he is ready to pay for it.

"This is the refectory," our guide announced, showing us with evident pride a dismal bare room closely packed with narrow benches and tables, the bare walls decorated with two or three large maps, like a very dreary class-room.

The motherly body in the Touraine cap, shook her head sadly and remarked, "It is not too gay—the poor little ones." But the father of the small boy pointed out the maps to his wife as an excellent idea for improving the shining hour. "In this manner no time is lost, if the boy has only a right spirit and desires to improve himself" said he. His wife

A NIGHT
NURSERY.

vouchsafed no reply. Being herself of the easy-going type, she regarded him, I think, as rather a bore.

We next mounted by an outside staircase to the dormitory. If the refectory was dismal it became lively as compared with this sinister-looking apartment. A double avenue of posts ran down the centre of the room, and from the walls were suspended rows of white canvas bags. No sign of a bed, or of any article of furniture whatever.

"Where do they sleep?" I asked, looking with dismay at the double row of posts down the centre of the room.

"Ah, but they sleep in the hammocks, of course," said our guide, taking one of the white canvas bags hanging from the walls and slinging it across to a post. "No pillows are necessary, you see, but in winter they have a small mattress and a cover of wool; in summer a sheet suffices."

"Admirably well-arranged," observed the lady of the victoria.

"Very bad for growing children," remarked Aunt Anne. "They cannot stretch their limbs. We have beds now at the new Naval College in England."

"We are not in England but in France, Madame," answered the father of Family G. in superior tones. The lady of the victoria gave him an approving grunt.

Each little fellow had a shelf in the wall near his hammock, marked with his name. On this were kept his second pair of boots and his few poor little possessions—sometimes a mother's photograph, sometimes a crucifix or small picture of a saint—unspeakably pathetic. The boots were enormous wooden sabots bound with iron and weighing like lead. I

asked why they were made with so much iron. "They are boots of penitence," I was told, and no others are worn at Mettray. From eight to eighteen boots of penitence, because when starving you stole a herring or a loaf of bread! How curiously are punishments made to fit crimes.

BOOTS OF
PENI-
TENCE.

At one end of the room in large black letters on the white-washed wall was inscribed the text :

" Chaque arbre qui ne produit pas le fruit on le
découpe et on le brûle."

The motherly body in the Touraine cap wiped her eyes and murmured softly, " Let the little ones come to me."

Aunt Anne overheard her, and whispering, "Yes, yes," slipped her arm inside that of the motherly one, but the father of the small boy pointed to the text exultingly, and complimented the family chief on his admirable device, clearly thinking the words were his own, written for the occasion.

Save for the posts, the bags and the small shelves the room was bare. "Home, sweet home." What a memory of childhood's happy days for these little boys!

"Is there any woman in the house?" asked Aunt Anne, determined not to be snubbed. She was told that in these families there are no mothers. "It is I who care for them, make them to rise, make them to eat, and make them to unclothe and go to bed at night," said the *chef de famille* with conscious satisfaction in his own suitability. He was not a brutal or ill-natured looking man, but one could see he loved rule and rules to the exclusion of everything else in life.

There was no play room, no kitchen in this home.

THE DAILY
ROUND.

Why should there be ; "one is not here to amuse oneself," as the family chief observed when we exclaimed at the way the day was parcelled out, for these little boys the same as for the elder ones !

The young man with a note-book asked for details, and the following were supplied by our guide.

Rise at twenty minutes to five in summer, in winter half-past five. After a bowl of soup and bread, work till eleven o'clock on the farm in the fields. From eleven till one o'clock lessons in the big class-room which we were presently shown. At one o'clock dinner, consisting of soup and bread and vegetables, twice a week meat. Till two o'clock recreation. After this solitary hour's respite, the only one in the day, work, divided between lessons in the school-house and labour on the farm, till seven o'clock, when soup for the third time and to sleep in the cramped canvas hammock. But at all events one felt glad to think the poor child was at last freed from his iron-bound boots of penitence. Oh, those awful boots !

The class-room was a separate building, large and airy, with the names of good boys inscribed on certificates round the walls, a comparatively cheerful place in spite of its atmosphere of unflagging discipline ; but the chapel with its narrow wooden benches maintained the same principle as the refectory and dormitory, that one was not at the *colonie* to amuse oneself !

It was in the chapel that our guide pointed out the ingenious arrangements by which the occupants of the "Maison Paternelle" could hear the *messe* without themselves being present, the same wall serving for both buildings. "I will show you presently how admirably all that is arranged," said our guide.

Walking round the farm and dairies we saw many

of the small boys at their various works, feeding the cows, filling the milk cans, cutting and binding the long stalks and evil smelling flax. Some were out in the vineyard gathering in the grapes—happy ones those—others, less fortunate, laboured hard in the big washhouse under the supervision of two severe-looking nuns. For ten of the Dames Blanches are employed in the *colonie* to direct the work of the kitchen, the laundry, and the infirmary, but under strict injunction not for an instant to relax discipline or show too human a side to the “badly turned.”

“LA VIE
EST
DURE.”

The nuns in the laundry appeared to be specially picked to fulfil these conditions, and looked about as likely to be overtaken by an access of injudicious sympathy as an Egyptian Sphinx. The boys were working with a dogged, savage intentness of purpose, twisting and scrubbing and beating the clothes as though they represented effigies of their dearest foes, which no doubt some of them did. Sister Helen must have looked just so as she held the wax effigy of her false lover over the fire.

A great number of cows are kept, and a large trade is done in milk and butter, but the ox that treads out the corn is closely muzzled—no milk or butter is he allowed.

“What will you?” said the family chief, in answer to Aunt Anne’s remark that surely they gave the boys the skim milk. “One gives them soup three times a day; they are well nourished. This is not a hospital for the little Rothschilds.”

“The soup is of course the most suitable. I find all this very well arranged,” observed the lady of the victoria, pointedly.

While the rest of the party were being conducted

A FUTURE
"PIOU-
PIOU."

through the cow-houses, I spoke to one little fellow washing out milk cans. He was small and frail, with a set white face full of dogged determination. His ankles were so thin they looked as if they would snap in two any moment from the weight of his "boots of penitence"! He looked twelve years old at the most, but told me he was seventeen next month. The under-sized were numerous, no doubt owing to the cramped hammocks for one thing.

"Then you will soon leave school and go to be a soldier?" I said hopefully, and smiled.

He gave an expressive shrug to his little thin shoulders, indicating small hope in that prospect.

Poor little fellow, after all will it be much better? Georges Darien's account of the life of a "*piou-piou*" or private soldier is not encouraging, and to have been at the *colonie* is to be branded a "*mauvaise tête, un enfant mal tourné*," even though the offence which sent you there was of the slightest, and your years of the tenderest.

I dared not say more to my little friend, for the family chief was in sight, followed by the inspecting party, and I feared to get him into trouble. As I joined the rest I noticed darts of animosity passing between Aunt Anne and the victoria lady; the party looked gloomy. Perhaps the sight of so many well-cared-for cows had depressed them; even the small boy, though busily eating sweets, seemed in low spirits. Only the guide appeared thoroughly pleased with life.

"And now, *messieurs et mesdames*," said he, with the air of one who has kept his good wine till the last, "we will visit the '*Maison Paternelle*.'"

As we followed our guide he explained to us the idea of this admirable institution, about which I

could see Aunt Anne was beginning to have misgivings.

A PATER-
NAL
HOUSE.

"Here one receives the young people, sons of rich parents, from the age of twelve years to twenty-one, whose relations cannot force them to be obedient and to conduct themselves well. The majority are those who refuse to work and follow their classes—the lazy, idle boy who obstinates himself against study. There are, of course, also the cases of immoral conduct, but the most part are the idle ones."

The prevailing impression of the paternal house was strong iron bars and locks. We were greeted at the entrance with a frontage of iron bars enclosing the portico, over which in large letters we read the alluring name of the building. No bell was rung—our guide noiselessly inserted a gigantic key, and we entered a large hall. A long row of locked doors greeted us on each side, and a gallery running round the top of the hall repeated the same thing. "These are their rooms," said our guide in an awful whisper. "They are shut up in there now—they must not hear us."

Aunt Anne clutched me by the arm. "Do they never come out?" she gasped. This gruesome hall oppressed one with a sense of doom and despair quite indescribable. No windows, no air from the skylight overhead; no hope for those who enter that "father's house" was the feeling that overpowered one.

"They are permitted to go out only in charge of a keeper for one hour in the day, but I will show you how one has arranged well for them," he added. "There is, I believe, one room vacant at the moment, so we can enter."

Two figures flitted rapidly and noiselessly across

THE
BADLY
TURNED.

the end of the gallery. A door opened and shut on one of them. Our guide signed to the keeper and he dropped a big key into his hand, pointing to one of the locked doors near us, which our guide proceeded to open.

A small, bare cell, just big enough to contain the narrow bed, small writing table, two chairs, and a minute chest of drawers and washstand. Iron bars enclosed the window, a padlock and chain enabled the door to be opened about four inches when required.

"You see," our guide showed us, "by this means they hear the *messe* in the chapel without quitting their rooms—the wall of the Paternal House is that also of the chapel. An excellent idea, *hein?*"

In these cells, he told us, the boys lived day and night for two, three, sometimes for six or seven years. Professors come from Tours and give their instruction at the small writing table. Their food is brought there, and they even hear the mass without leaving their rooms.

Once a month they take a bath, more often if the relations are willing to pay extra for it. They are escorted to the bath by a guardian. Never for a moment does he lose sight of his charge. These attendants are constantly changed in order to run no risk of an intimacy springing up or bribes and corruption becoming possible. The isolation of each boy is so complete that two brothers were once there together for over two years without either of them knowing it.

The silence is as complete as the solitude, no one speaking above a whisper, but there have been occasions, we were given to understand, when the stillness has been broken by voices of despair and

indignation echoing loudly round the grim hall on the arrival of some new-comer.

TWO
TYPES OF
FRENCH
MOTHER.

Aunt Anne murmured in my ear, "Felicity, my dear, I can't bear it. Don't be surprised if I shout aloud presently. I want all those poor darlings behind the locked doors to know they have got a friend."

I was wondering whether any of the unfortunate prisoners had mothers, and what they looked like, and why they had not razed this paternal establishment to the ground, when the victoria lady pushed past me into the empty cell. She looked round approvingly. "Ah, but they have here all they need," she observed to the guide.

"They have even more than they need, it appears to me, Madame," said Aunt Anne, a dangerous light in her eye.

"Ha! you would say there is too much furniture?" enquired the lady pleasantly.

"Too much, yes, Madame, in the matter of bars and bolts."

"Ah, but all that is very necessary or they would surely escape. They have no scruples, no gratitude, those bad boys there. Me, I know them—you, Madame, evidently lack experience."

"Sch—Silence, I beg you, Mesdames, until we go out," said the guardian; and I dragged Aunt Anne from the explosive vicinity of this lady, but she kept up a subterranean murmur, reminding me of the sounds I heard on Vesuvius one evening just before a terrible volcanic eruption.

I knew now what the mothers of the boys here looked like. The old body in a Touraine cap was weeping freely and sighing, "Ah, my God, the poor children!" We had both types of French mother.

**PATERNAL
SYSTEM.**

The price for the privilege of placing your son under this paternal roof is £12 a month, all instruction being extra. Any infringement of the intricate network of rules and regulations meets with prompt punishment of such a nature as to offer little encouragement to a repetition of the offence.

The priest is permitted to visit the cells and try his hand on the stony ground, under direction of the committee, but neither he nor the professors nor attendants are told the names of the boys. They are known only by the number on their cell door. The reason for this is that their sojourn at the Paternal House may not tell against them in after life. "Their acquaintances suppose them to be *en voyage*, or in an English or German family learning the language. One invents a little romance, see you," said our guide.

He imparted all this information in a hoarse whisper, looking round cautiously at the closed doors on every side.

We breathed more freely when we got outside again. The small boy shot out like a stone from a sling directly the doors were opened.

"Ha, he is much impressed, the little one," laughed his father. "It is well to show them such an institution; it gives to think."

"It does indeed, sir," said Aunt Anne, and enquired in a compressed voice of the guide whether it was difficult to enter a candidate for this place.

He assured her by no means, all that was necessary being for two relations, a parent or guardian being one, to send a signed request to a magistrate. The permission granted six months only, but this could be renewed half-yearly up till the time the boy was of age

or had at least passed all his examinations and taken his *baccalauréat* at eighteen.

AUNT
ANNE
SPEAKS
HER MIND.

Like all gentlemen of the tribe of Bumble, his powers of perception were limited and elementary. Thinking the question implied personal interest he hastened guilelessly to assure her, "It is rare that this system succeeds not. Madame will be satisfied with the result, I can promise. Even if her son has the head of a calf one finds the means to make some instruction to enter."

"I thank you, Monsieur. I would sooner far, place a son of mine in his coffin than in this house," replied Aunt Anne with fervour.

Bumble gasped as if he had received a blow on the chest. The victoria lady laughed scornfully and said something aside to the young man with a note-book. That laugh was just the last straw to Aunt Anne's overcharged soul. She did not drop down under the weight of it, she rose like a flame and burnt that last straw to a cinder. Linking her arm within that of her friend of the Touraine cap, she addressed the company, sure at least of the support and sympathy of one among them.

"I am an Englishwoman and a mother. You, Monsieur, of course are neither," she turned to the family chief, whose Bumbledom was beginning to reassert itself in swelling chest and inflated cheeks. "You are an official, you do but your duty; it is with you no question of heart more than with an automobile, who obeys the hand of the chauffeur."

Bumble looked a trifle uncertain of this compliment.

"But I see before me three ladies who are, I presume, probably mothers, to them I make my

A LAY
SERMON.

protest, to them I cry in the name of the little children we have seen to-day—the children of the poor and also the children of the rich, the unhappy inmates of that sombre prison. I speak from a full experience—I have brought up forty boys and girls."

"My faith, what families these English have!" ejaculated the father of the small boy, while the young man with the note-book wrote busily.

Without condescending to explain they were the children of her Orphan Home, Aunt Anne continued :

"Do not imagine that by crushing a rebellious nature you make it good ; it is love alone and infinite patience which changes the bad nature of a boy if he has a bad nature, which is, I think, seldom. But imagine, Oh, you fathers and mothers, the despair, the torture, of these poor young souls as they realise what they must endure on entering this 'Maison Paternelle.' Paternal! What a mockery is that name. 'Infernal' I should rather call it. Does any sin merit such a punishment? To be taken from the life of joy and freedom and happy companionship, locked in a prison cell in silence and utter solitude, never a moment's freedom, never the sight of a young face! And this perhaps for years and years and years! You, Madame, pronounced that they have all they need!" She turned on the lady of the victoria, who instinctively took a step backwards as though to ward off danger. "You are doubtless a 'Catholic and believe in purgatory. I trust when you are there, and God is meting out to you what you have meted out to others, you will find in that place of residence all you need, boots of penitence into the bargain. Oh, yes, the good God will not forget the

boots of penitence for *all* of you. Imagine it to yourselves! A little child of eight taught by his parents to steal unless he would be beaten and starved, condemned by a rich, well-fed official to wear boots of penitence and lead a life of incessant toil in a reformatory until he is grown up and his country claims his body and brain for her military service. In verity I make you my compliments, French fathers and mothers, and I thank God that I am English! Come, Felicity, my dear, I feel really ill with wrath, and speaking so much French."

MONSIEUR-
GNEUR'S
DEFENCE.

Dropping an appeasing five-franc piece into the hand of Bumble, and shaking hands warmly with the motherly one, Aunt Anne hurried off quickly to the carriage, and sitting down promptly burst into tears.

* * * * *

The following day we went to see our Archbishop, and Aunt Anne poured out her heart to him.

He listened attentively, now and then making a note of something she said, but letting her talk it all out without interruption. At the end he sighed deeply.

"Alas, my daughter, life is very difficult," he said. "With regard to the 'Maison Paternelle' it is a terrible problem which confronts those unhappy parents who place their sons there. You are right in calling it a purgatory, if by that you mean a place of remedial punishment. Let me tell you of one instance among many which have come under my own eyes. Some years ago a man in a high position in the army called to see me with his son, a boy of seventeen years old. They came together to consult me, the father in despair as to his son's future, the boy indignant and rebellious, yet of a good heart, as the sequel proved.

A PROBLEM.

It appeared this boy had been sent away from every college and school where his father had placed him. Always the same story, plenty of brains but of an incorrigible idleness. Making good resolves only to break them directly he found himself with other idle and foolish companions. Spending money he did not possess with recklessness, the father impoverishing himself to pay the boy's bad debts and save him from dishonour. What to do? One year's steady, quiet work and he might yet pass his examinations and save his future career. The boy had fortunately brains enough to realise this and also his own invincible weakness if placed again where temptation could assail him. Happily my reasoning prevailed with him, and of his own free will he consented before leaving me to agree to his father's wish that he should try for six months at least the 'Maison Paternelle.' At the end of that time he voluntarily returned there till the end of the year, when he passed all his examinations with the greatest success. He is now a distinguished officer at St. Cyr, and only last year he came to thank me for my counsels in sending him to the 'Maison Paternelle'; it was, he assured me, the only system which could have arrested his downward career at the time. Another case, on which I will not dwell, was to my knowledge equally successful. A boy of fourteen years, the son of a rich widow lady who had spoilt him till he had passed beyond all control and was, alas! being fast ruined in body and soul by vicious and depraved companions. Two years at Mettray saved that lad. But I could wish with you, my dear Madame, that the treatment was less severe—much less severe," he added sadly.

"English boys would never stand it," said Aunt

Anne. "If they could not invent a way of escape they would go mad."

THE
ENGLISH
SOLUTION.

Monseigneur smiled. "I don't think such a case has ever been known. The boys' health is carefully watched by the doctor, I am told, and one must bear in mind that those who founded this sad house are good men and have the welfare of the boys at heart, even if their methods are in some ways mistaken. You see, the young people are kept constantly occupied, and are rarely left alone except at night. Each hour of the day is mapped out for various studies with different professors, also for exercise and for walking. This method, they tell me, is what restores the mental and bodily equilibrium of the poor boy who has become absolutely disorganised. You are happy, indeed, if your English homes are free from those sad cases—generally, without doubt, the fault of foolish bringing up on the part of the parents."

Aunt Anne was beginning to waver. I saw it in her whole attitude, which was becoming limp.

"Alas, Monseigneur, I fear we have some such cases," she confessed.

"And how do you reform them, my daughter? It will interest me greatly to learn."

A long pause on the part of Aunt Anne. At last she spoke slowly:

"There are, I fear, some cases we have no means of reforming. I think they generally go to America or the colonies," she added, more hopefully.

Monseigneur looked doubtful. "America or the colonies! Well, I have never journeyed far, but I should have thought that only a character of great strength and steadfastness would succeed under

MON-
SEIGNEUR
AND THE
BOYS.

conditions of trial and temptation united with absolute liberty."

It struck me Aunt Anne herself was conscious of a certain flaw in this solution of the problem, for she hurried back to the *colonie* and the boots of penitence. Here Monseigneur was at one with her. As for the boots, he had never examined them, he owned, having taken for granted they were merely the ordinary necessary *sabots* for country wear. The treatment of the boys, he thought, was too severe, but much depended on the manager, who had considerable power to soften their lives in many ways and relax the stern rules. The present man did so whenever and wherever he could, for he loved the boys, gave holidays on all fête days, and recognised good conduct with prizes and rewards, studying individual character and tastes. He, the Archbishop, went to the *colonie* yearly to confirm the boys, and at other times also, to patronise their sports and give away prizes. He always treated them to coffee and distributed sous. Small wonder that he saw singularly cheerful little faces whenever he visited there!

Our views about the "Maison Paternelle" were still more modified by a conversation after this with another friend whose husband was one of the committee and a supporter of all philanthropic institutions in the neighbourhood. One was forced to acknowledge there were, perhaps, two sides to the shield, though neither of them what could be called bright.

This lady acknowledged that the cure was a terrible one, but the cases were also terrible, she maintained. "It appears to you a slight fault to be idle and to be disobedient; but the consequences are not slight when a life is thereby ruined. It is only, remember, when all

other means fail that I would recommend this, but there are cases which I fear are only to be reached by this drastic system." She agreed, however, that two years should be the limit of any boy's sojourn there.

USES OF
PUR-
GATORY.

The idea of the paternal abode is, she told us, that the boy is driven to look upon study as his greatest privilege. On first arriving he is kept in complete idleness and solitude, and is allowed no book or writing material. At last, from sheer boredom, he begs for a book, *faute de mieux*, even a dictionary or a grammar. The next day he is ready to welcome the sight of a professor as of a boon companion, and his good conduct is made a condition of being allowed to take up his various studies. So he comes to study and to be thankful for it. He gets the habit of steady work and sets his mind to it, feeling that the sooner he passes his examinations the sooner comes his liberty. He is well fed and cared for, but his identity is kept secret from everyone, and for this he is grateful, specially in after life, when it might seriously tell against him to have been through this curative process of Purgatory. Even the professors know only the boy's number, not his name. It is a private administration, acknowledged by the State, and supported by the Church, founded for purely philanthropic motives and ideas. The applications are so numerous they could fill the building twice over, and are going to enlarge it considerably.

That evening Aunt Anne called to me from her room. "I have been thinking, Felicity, what an excellent thing it would be to start a 'Maison Paternelle' in England—with modifications, of course. What do you think?"

AMONG THE FÉLIBRES IN PROVENCE.

INVASION
OF PRO-
VENCE.

"AVIGNON!" shouted the porter as the train drew up. And for the first time, instead of gazing regretfully from the windows and then being whirled on, either to Paris or Marseilles, I jumped from the dizzy heights of the P.L.M. train on to the platform below, feeling I had a right at last to stop here, luggage and ticket being stamped with the name which in itself conveys a magic charm.

Aunt Anne's voice of farewell mingled with the departing shriek of the engine as her face, shaded by the mushroom hat, quickly vanished into the dim distance *en route* for Marseilles, where she was to meet one of her numerous adopted family. So feeling no chaperon would be needed for this occasion, I had snatched at this golden chance of stopping at Avignon and seeing something of the real land of Provence; for the invasion of the Anglo-Saxon race throughout the length and breadth of the beautiful coast has completely obliterated all trace of Provence from the Hyères, Cannes and Nice of to-day. Few people wintering on the Riviera realise they are in Provence at all. How should they? They stay in a big German hotel, are waited on by German waiters and chambermaids, and rarely hear around them any tongue save English, American and German.

Though we were only to be parted a few days,

Aunt Anne gave me warnings and counsels sufficient to guide me through the perils and intricacies of a long life. I was particularly commended to the care of her special friend *Madame la propriétaire* of the comfortable little inn at which I had engaged rooms, and I had also my own special friend awaiting me close by in the Rue St. Agricole. So my opportunities for going astray did not threaten to be many. It seemed absurd to dream of seeing anything of a land which is such a perfect store-house of interest, of historic memories and monuments, in a few short days, but the country of Mireille at least I would see, and perhaps, too, if the ancient Roman deities looked with favour on my pilgrimage to their shrines, something of the poets who have revived the old classic spirit of Provence and led the patriotic movement of the Félibres.

COUNTRY
OF
MIREILLE.

To wake at Avignon with the sun of Provence shining in at your window on a morning of St. Martin's little summer is a goodly thing. One needs must rejoice to be alive.

Avignon! Marius, Augustus, Constantine, pass in triumphal procession across one's vision. The sumptuous Popes follow, dwelling for nearly a century in magnificent pomp in their fortress palace on the hill. And Petrarch, the divine poet, was it not in these very streets he walked, dreaming and singing of his love for the chaste lady Laura, she whose tomb in the old church of the "Cordeliers" became in after years the shrine of generations of devout poet-pilgrims, François I^{er} himself paying his homage by leaving a sonnet from his own royal hand inside the coffin.

Avignon, scene of countless historic events, kingly

AN IDEAL
BOOK-
SHOP.

pageants, imperial processions, bull-fights rivalling those of Rome, battles, murders and sudden deaths, a tradition kept up by the grim Jourdain Coupe Tête of the Revolution and his hundred victims flung from the height of the rock into the tower of la Glacière. Avignon, with its old bridge of which our nursery rhyme told us the thrilling fact that "Tout le monde y danse, danse—Sur le pont d'Avignon tout le monde y danse en rond."

Finally, the Avignon of to-day, which is still a centre of interest, being the home of the *Félibres*, the birthplace of *Félibrige*, that far-spreading literary Renaissance which during these past fifty years has made of Avignon truly a provincial Athens.

My first visit was to a certain little old-fashioned book-shop in the little old narrow street of St. Agricole, where inscribed above the door is the name of a famous poet of Provence. Even without that name to draw one irresistibly, it would be hard to pass the beguiling little shop with its old editions and time-worn leather-bound books enticing one not only from the window but from the quaint little tressel-tables outside. I had an added inducement to enter, for a friend awaited me in the charming low-roofed salon at the back, the dark-eyed *Dono Térèso*, the daughter and niece of two great patriot-poets, a *Félibresse* too on her own account, being a former Queen of the *Félibres*, a distinguished office held for seven years, during which time she presided over all the *Félibrige* and *Cigale fêtes*. The mother of *Dono Térèso* is also a poet, and of no mean order, devoted to the work of the *Félibres* and, like her husband, a native of Saint-Rémy. As she quoted from an early popular

poem of his, first in Provençal, and then for my benefit, in French: A TREE OF LIFE,

" Dans un mas* qui se cache au milieu des promiers,
Un beau matin, au temps de la moisson,
Je suis né d'un jardinier et d'une jardinière,
Dans les jardins de Saint-Rémy."

Fifty years ago the little acorn of Félibrige was planted by seven poets of Provence, who met together at Font-Ségugne (Vaucluse), and vowed themselves to the patriotic work of restoring, purifying and perpetuating the old language of Provence, the *langue d'Oc*, at that time fast dying out and degenerating into a mere *patois* of many varieties. To-day Félibrige is a mighty oak, the leaves being, like those of the Tree of Life "for the healing of the nation," the branches spreading not only over the length and breadth of the beloved land itself, but stretching to the remotest parts of France, even to Brittany, where in 1884 Renan took up the movement and inaugurated the "Félibres de l'Ouest."

The real initiator of this widespread Renaissance was Joseph Roumanille, for he was the first modern poet to use the ancient tongue of the Troubadours as a medium for literary expression. His book of poems, published in the year 1847, was written for his mother, a simple peasant of Saint-Rémy guiltless of a word of French. Full of the traditions and beauties of Provence, his writings found an immediate echo in the heart of a people always enthusiastically patriotic. Roumanille, Mistral and Ouseline Mathieu, meeting as three collegians at Avignon, formed the nucleus

* A farmhouse.

THE
SOWERS.

from which sprang the Félibrige Society founded by the seven poets, of whom Théodore Aubanel and Félix Gras were distinguished members.

But though Roumanille was the initiator and the editor of the first yearly Félibrige organ, under whose Oriflamme the poet-patriots mustered, it was Mistral who developed and led the movement. He became at once its vital essence, the prophet, seer and chief, "il Capoulié" or Grand-Master, by universal consent. No one like he has so expressed the soul of the people. His work mirrors not only their language and customs, their past, their beliefs, their traditions, but in a marvellous manner their land itself, so that with new sight and clearer vision they now look on the familiar landmarks of their youth, the mountains, rivers and plains.

Mistral sings his "Lion d'Arles;" and henceforth that famous rock of the Alpilles and his patriotic song, reviewing the grand past of Arles, become inseparable, the song rising to the lips of every good Provençal as spontaneously as a morning greeting to a friend on the road.

The vast wind-swept plain of the stony Crau, with its green oases of olive and vineyards, becomes "the country of Mireille," the sweet heroine of that great epic which caused Lamartine to proclaim Mistral *un vrai poète Homérique*. Even the sun of Provence is endowed with a new significance and personality by the "Chant du Soleil," while the glorious "Hymne à la Race Latine" sends a thrill and glow of patriotic pride through every man, woman and child, not only of Provence but of all the Midi where the *langue d'Oc* is spoken.

"Aubouro-te, Raço latino,
Souto la capo d'ou soutèn !
Lou rasin brun boui dins la tino,
Lou vin de Diéu gisclara teu." *Etc.*

THE
LANGUAGE
D'OC.

("Arise, thou Latin race—
Under the cloak of the sun !
The brown grape 'bubbles in the vat'
And the wine of God gushes forth.") *Etc.*

As for the language of Provence, had Mistral never written another word he has enshrined it for all times in the imperishable casket of that marvellous work "Lou Trésor dóu Félibrige," a dictionary comprising all the words of the *langue d'Oc* in its seven varieties of dialect, with all derivations, idioms, obsolete terms, proverbs and sayings of the entire Midi. The history of the race is contained in this book. It opens with a sonnet, the French of which begins, "O peuple du Midi, écoute ma harangue : Si tu veux reconquérir l'empire de ta langue, pour l'équiper à neuf, puis dans ce Trésor."

One marked feature of this far-reaching Renaissance is the entire absence of any political element. The Félibre is a better and more loyal Frenchman for his devotion to the land and language of Provence. His protest is merely against the deadly influence of uniformity and centralisation which kills out individuality and all that goes to making a man instead of a machine. "To change the language of a people is almost to change the soul," says Gaston Paris. The heart and soul of this race of old Roman stock will never consent to change while a man remains alive.

The mother of Dono Térèso spoke of the early days of the Félibres when their little house was the favourite meeting place, and she told of the simple life of these true poets who dreamt as little of using

A
PERFECT
COSTUME.

their art as a means of making money or gaining personal renown as does the thrush singing his song of spring on the bough of apple blossom. Then as the patriot movement spread, of their larger réunions, their Feasts of Saint-Estelle, symbolic patron saint of the order, at Nîmes, at Arles, at Cannes, at Marseilles—with their brothers the Cigales, Félibres of Paris, chiefly exiled Provençaux. The Cigale was soon adopted by all as badge, a bronze grasshopper in buttonhole and hat being worn by every good Félibre. Oh, those good old days when Roumanille, Aubanel, Felix Gras, now alas all gone, lived here in Avignon, with their Capoulié close by at Maillane!

* * * * *

Saint-Remy, including the surrounding country, stretching to Avignon, was once the ancient Greek colony of Glanum, and walking with Dono Térèso through the winding old streets of the Papal city, one was constantly reminded of this Greco-Roman ancestry. The women, with their stately, dignified walk and statuesque outlines of face and figure, are evidently lineal descendants of the Tanagra statuettes, and their classic beauty is brought out admirably by the graceful Arlesienne costume. It is sad to hear that both in Avignon and Arles it is dying out, though happily still worn in all country districts. One sighs to think that women can lay aside for a commonplace modern garb showing no line of beauty from head to foot this beautiful dress, so simple and practical, yet so flattering to their good looks. A straight full skirt, either black or dark violet, long pointed shawl, full white fichu folded across the breast, and a head-dress the most becoming ever devised for a woman's head! A broad black

velvet band worn like a coronet, and with just as regal an effect, one end falling down at the back, encircling a small white embroidered muslin cap which is drawn up into a coquettish point.

OLD
AVIGNON.

* * * * *

We wandered through the streets once trodden by Pétrarch, passing the great sombre Hotel de Sade, home of Laura, who married a de Sade, and another historic palace, the Baroncelli-Javons, little changed by the passing of the centuries. Over the door of the latter are the crossed oak branches of Pope Julius II. of the house of Baroncelli, and first archbishop of Avignon. On entering may be seen the rooms of Henri IV. and of Saint Francois de Paule, besides the helmet and sword of the "brave Crillon," faithful friend of Henri IV. His statue, for so long the centre of the Place de l'Horloge, was removed to the Place du Palais, where no one notices it, to make place for the aggressive monument celebrating the union of the Comtal Venaissin with France—a great event in the history of Avignon.

The name of Aubanel greeted us over an old book-shop. "It was there he lived, our dear Aubanel," remarked my friend.

With keen interest I looked at the poet's house. How wise they were, these Avignon poets, to create for themselves such a congenial atmosphere as that of a book-shop—of all surroundings the most attractive. To feel it a duty, instead of the indulgence of an extravagant hobby, to buy first editions and beguiling leather bindings and to go to sales of old libraries.

My friend laughed at this rose-coloured view of her life. "If you would live you must also sell your

THE
POPES'
ROCK.

books," she said, "and that is what tears one the heart if one has obtained some treasure."

I protested I would hide the treasures and sell only what I did not care for.

"Then I fear you would become very thin in your bookshop," said this practical lady who kept one.

We mounted by the long zig-zag road to the Palace of the Popes, on our way pausing to visit Notre Dame des Dom, founded by Ste. Marthe, in honour "of the Virgin still living." Here stands the deserted Papal throne, a white marble sculptured seat, and that most beautiful tomb of the good Pope Benedict XII. There he lies with his hands on his breast as though asleep—a most noble head and figure, dignified and gracious, bearing a strange resemblance to a certain late Archbishop of Canterbury.

Leaving the Popes' church we continued to mount higher and ever higher the rocky sides of the fortress hill. We spent but little time on the palace itself, which is at present given over to the garrison. Soldiers swarm in every part and clatter up and down the steep stone stairs and through the long passages. Such strong, fine-looking young soldiers, many sizes bigger than the average little English recruit! But then a conscription army includes the best of the nation, and one is apt to forget that British patriotism in the classes which serve in the ranks, rarely goes to the length of a desire to choose the profession of arms unless driven to that alternative by hunger, which antecedents are not conducive to a fine physique. Everything in these military quarters was bare and white. Even the frescoes of Ghirlandaio

are covered with whitewash except for one small corner showing where they are hidden. A FAIR
LAND.

Continuing our ascent at last we found ourselves on the plateau at the summit which by indefatigable industry has been converted into a peaceable public garden with shady trees and walks, fountains and ponds, little in keeping with the stormy past of the old rock. From here we looked down on the city with its closely packed red brown roofs, towers, churches, and convents. At our feet the yellow Rhone rushed by, breathless, hurrying as if racing for a wager. Dante says, "Come ad Arli ov' il Rhodano stagna." If this be so it must have been from exhaustion after his exertions just before, for there is little sign of stagnation in the Rhone at Avignon.

On the famous bridge no one dances now. Silent and deserted, cut in two, stands this once royal road of the Kings and Popes, leading from the fortress of Avignon to the tower of Philippe le Bel at Villeneuve-les-Avignon, the walled city on the opposite bank.

Away in the far distance towards Arles rose the Montagnette of Tarascon, city of Tartarin and of that fabulous Tarasque dragon who devastated the countryside till St. Martha laid him low with the sign of the Cross and a drop of holy water.

The Pope's gigantic rock seemed to dominate the whole round world. From this splendid height all the country lay spread out like a fair garden, on one hand bounded by the snow-capped Ventoux and the Luberon range, towards the south by the low wall of rocky Alpilles, beyond which lies the ruins of the once great city of Les Baux.

Graveson, Maillane, Barbentan, Saint-Rémy,

THE HOME
OF PAN.

Châteaurenard lay low on the green plain, the Durance winding and twisting its capricious way, now hidden, now reappearing unexpectedly between the dark rows of cypress trees—those protecting guardians of the country from the too vigorous mistral, that purifying north wind of Provence.

"That is where we will drive to-morrow," said Dono Térèso, pointing towards the jagged wall of the Alpilles. "Over there to the home of our beloved Capoulié."

The gods were good indeed! It must have been Pan, my special deity of the pipes and reedy streams and woodlands, who had wrought for me this gracious answer to my wish. That Pan is not dead one soon learns in Provence as surely as in Rome, where his Feast, the 12th of January, is kept lively all through the night with the shrill blowing of his pipes. Oh no, Pan and all his goodly company are very much alive in the staunch Catholic hearts of the descendants of old Rome and Greece, and it is the Félibre poets who have breathed into them fresh life. In "Les Îles d'Or" the ancient gods drink once more at their own fountain of serenity and light, while at the sound of "le Chant du Soleil" Apollo awakes and raises proudly his laurel-crowned brow. Here in Provence at least are still sons of men, sons of Joy, whose ears can hear the echo of the music he made when the world was young.

The following day, with the delightfully suitable escort of a Félibre Queen, I drove across the plains to visit the great poet of Provence and his charming wife.

In the orchards the last fruits were being gathered, in the vineyards the last bunches of grapes pressed

into the big casks or being trodden by the men à pied nu. Here, as in Touraine, autumn brought with it no chill touch of dying and decay, only the reposeful sense of a task accomplished. The harvesters, the birds, and the *cigales* all sang from the joy of their hearts. There was no dirging afterthought that chill winter was descending to wrap the earth in darkness and death for more than half a year. Just a short sleep for rest and recuperation, and before February is out, the light footsteps of spring will be heard.

THE TREES
OF PRO-
VENCE.

We crossed the high bridge of the Durance, the river at this point so wide and swift it suggested the sea coming in as a flood. The beautiful waters, now blue, now white, have something in them of dangerous and treacherous, not without cause, for in the heavy rains this river is a constant menace to the city close by. Driving through the wide street of Graveson we passed groups of women, all in Arlesienne costume, with every variety of colour, one imperial-looking woman wearing a violet skirt and yellow shawl.

These classic figures had a perfect background in the old church tower, with its bell of stone, and the rows of straight, tall cypress, which abound in this part of the country. These trees give to the gardens and farms they protect a solemn, conventual air, and a character as distinctly individual to the landscape as the hedgerows of England or stone dykes of Scotland.

Opposite the house of the poet is a sun-dial in the wall, with the words in Provençal :

" Gai lézard, bois ton soleil
L'heure ne passe que trop vite—
Et demain il pleuvra peut-être."

"That is typical of the spirit of Provence," said

THE
POET'S
HOME.

Dono Térésa. And I felt again for the hundredth time I was really in Italy, not in France at all. These people with their Roman ruins, Greco-Roman figures and faces, Roman speech, (may the *Félibres* forgive me, but the relationship is so close that anyone speaking French and Italian can at least read Provençal), and Italian hearts, joyous, sun-warmed, patriotic, what are they but Romans still?

We entered the poet's study by the garden, conducted there by a friendly white-capped *bonne*, evidently quite one of the family. "Madame was out with the dogs, Monsieur was alone, but at this moment of the day not seriously occupied. We might enter without scruple—he would be enchanted to see us."

The little garden was a blaze of warm autumn colour. A bed of salvia, its scarlet blossoms aflame in the sunshine, chrysanthemums, violet, white, and rose, rioting begonia of every hue, and rows of dahlias and sunflowers, all grew together in a sweet disorder, without sign of gardener's assistance or preconceived design.

At the sound of our voices the poet stepped out of the open French widow—a tall, robust, splendid figure, full of a vitality and vigour that made his seventy-four years seem incredible. He greeted his little *Félibresse*, the daughter of his closest friend and collaborator for forty years, with warmth. "I saw her born," he remarked, as an explanatory note.

We entered the study, a real workroom, or *cabinet de travail*. Books and engravings and photographs of friends, some of them faces the world knows well, covered the walls. In the corner stood a bust of Lamartine, on the chimney-piece a small *Venus de*

Milo and other statuettes, one of the poet himself, in his soft felt "wideawake" and loose working coat. To our apologies for interrupting him he answered that our arrival enchanted him, and was especially welcome just then as giving him relief from a tiresome work on which he was engaged, a work only to be described as *un travail de brute*. It was the rendering into French of his autobiography from the original Provençal. Considering the widespread interest with which this book is awaited we could not encourage him in laying it aside, except, as we pointed out, for our benefit that afternoon. It would be hard, not only on his own countrymen but on all to whom the beautiful *langue d'Oc* is unknown, to seal up such a work in the Provençal tongue.

FOREIGN
FÉLIBRES.

He spoke of the Félibre movement in other countries, offshoots of the original stem. Of the Roumanian folk songs gathered together by Carmen Sylva and Hélène Vacaresco—two true Félibresses. Also of the revival of the Gaelic tongue and the work of Mr. Yeats and others, in which he felt great interest, Ireland being in some ways a parallel case to that of Provence.

"It is the forbidding a language to be used in the schools and churches that most surely tends to kill it," said the poet, "but in Provence the patriotic love of our mother tongue is too deeply planted for any Government to uproot. It needs but the voice of the poets to awaken into new life."

I asked him of the old music and folk songs of the country. "For that," he said, "you must go to Paradou, to our brave 'Charloun' the Félibre. He is a peasant, a real peasant, not a sham one like some of them. He has never ceased to work in the fields,

PENALTY
OF FAME.

to sow, to reap, to toil for his daily bread. He has lived all his life, sixty years, in the little village of Paradou, near Arles. Go to him and he will sing to you by the hour the songs he has written to the ancient melodies of this country, songs which the people have claimed as their own, 'li Cant' d'ou teraire' ('chants du terroir'). Say that I sent you."

"I will go to-morrow," I said promptly.

The poet and Dono Térèsò exchanged recent news of mutual Félibres friends, among others of that gifted poet, writer, and artist who has been for years "Chancellor" of the Félibres, and whose "Terre Provençale" is the most fascinating companion and guide to all travellers in Provence, while for those unable to visit that enchanting land it serves as an Aladdin's carpet, transporting them straight to the very spot, with the sun of Provence overhead.

A motor car whizzed by in the road beyond the garden. The poet shuddered. "Happily they are not stopping at my door this time!" He gave a sigh of relief. "To that invention," he said, "I owe those frequent parties of half-a-dozen persons who descend upon me suddenly at all hours of the day and even sometimes of the night. They arrive from all corners of the earth. Tourists from Lyons, Marseilles, Nîmes, Aix, etcetera. God knows where they come not from! I have the misfortune to be now in their catalogue of monuments."

He broke into his big, genial laugh, seasoned with just a spice of sarcasm. "There is the Pont du Gard, the Arch and Mausoleum of Saint-Rémy, and the poet—they do us all in one tour, you see."

I thought of Goldsmith, Chatterton, Keats, and wondered if they would have preferred this form of fame.

"So you pay for renown," I sympathised.

"So I expiate it," he groaned.

THE
POET'S
DOUBLE.

I suggested he should come to London, where I would find him a quiet corner in which to rest and hide since peace and quiet became so impossible in the plains of Provence.

He shook his head. "Even there in your London I might find a difficulty, for curiously enough it appears I resemble exactly a famous Englishman, or rather American, of the name Bouffaloo! Is there not one so called, yes?"

"Buffalo Bill," I laughed, and looking at the small statue on the mantelpiece realised why it had seemed so strangely familiar, recalling as it did the hoardings outside the Earl's Court Exhibition and those recently posted all over Paris.

"Yes," continued the poet, "it is now twelve years ago since I was in Paris. One day, breakfasting in a café on the Grands Boulevards, I beheld an exact double of myself. This man regarded me, and I him, startled and surprised. I said to myself, "Am I myself, or am I perhaps him? Same figure, same moustache, same hat! He also had the air of saying this. Finally we advanced and shook hands warmly, I and Monsieur Bouffaloo, who it appears was at that moment delighting all Paris with his ponies and his Indians of the Wild West."

In this connection the poet went on to tell us of a dog, who about this same time came in a strange manner into his life. Walking one day in the fields between Maillane and Saint-Rémy, a strange and foreign-looking beast suddenly ran up to him. No amount of discouragement would prevail upon this dog to leave him. He looked up into his face, wagged his tail

AN
ANCESTOR
REINCAR-
NATED.

and greeted the poet as a long-lost friend. Persistently he followed him home, and never till the day of his death did he depart. Some time after it was reported that Buffalo Bill had passed through Tarascon with his dogs, horses, and Indians on his way to Marseilles. "Evidently this dog had strayed from the rest and was attracted to me by the resemblance of my hat to that of his master," said the poet. "This at least was my first idea, but I have since been convinced that there existed also another reason. He was in reality an ancestor reincarnated, one who came to help and protect me, for rarely is it given to any man to possess such a friend as that dog was to me, while volumes might be written by the "Société des Recherches Psychiques" on his extraordinary qualities and occult gifts."

He then proceeded to relate some instances of this strange dog's powers.

"On the day of the Toussaint it is the custom of my wife, accompanied by our faithful Eisabéu, to visit the cemetery and place a wreath on the tomb of our family. Pan-Perdu, for so I named him, at that time newly arrived, ran in before them and disappeared among the labyrinth of tombs and paths. When they arrived at their destination, however, behold Monsieur Pan-Perdu awaiting them seated on the tomb of the family! Remark well, never before had he entered that cemetery, yet he runs straight to the right place. Who but an ancestor could have done this?"

We agreed it was certainly unanswerable.

On another occasion Pan-Perdu proved himself, besides, an ancestor in whom the staunch principles of the Catholic faith survived in spite of his reappearance on earth with four-legs and a tail.

"The bishop was holding a service of confirmation in our little village church," said the poet. It was not the custom of Pan-Perdu to attend the services—he knew well that man excludes dogs from these rites, but on this occasion he entered quietly and unobserved, and as the bishop laid his hand on the bended heads of the children, behold the black head of Pan-Perdu thrust under his hand. "What is this?" cries Monseigneur, startled and shocked. The children seeing Pan-Perdu, their friend, smile and excuse him. "Oh, it is the dog of the poet—he is not as other dogs," they reply. "Oh, the dog of the poet," exclaims the good bishop, and stretching out his hand he lays it also on the head of Pan-Perdu, thereby confirming him also. Pan-Perdu respectfully licks the episcopal ring and having been thus made a good Christian he discreetly retires. Ah, here come his descendants to vouch for the truth of my story," he added, two dogs bounding up, and we rose to greet a charming, poetic-looking woman of a wonderful calm and serenity, who came towards us through the garden. Hearing we were speaking of the beloved Pan-Perdu, she introduced us to his son and grandson, with whom she had been walking. At her request we then accompanied her into the little dining-room, where we partook of golden wine, a nectar fit for Olympians, and delicious little biscuits stamped with the Félibre badge of the grasshopper.

"This, you know, is 'the divine beast,'" she laughed, and explained she was quoting the words of Plato. "You cannot refuse to partake of him." We gladly ate cigales in plenty, they spoke for themselves even without this high reference, but whether the ancient sage was also a Cigale or a Félibre, or both, I failed to make out. No one can doubt, however,

PAN-
PERDU
CON-
FIRMED.

THE POET-
MONK.

that Plato owns with pride any brotherhood with the authors of "Les Îles d'Or," "l'Oubretto," or "Chansons du Terroir."

As to the wine, the poet told us it was made by a famous Félibre, a monk of the Premontre order, for years his friend and neighbour at the monastery of Frigolet, near Tarascon, now alas, "expulsed" with the rest of his brothers. "What was one to think of the action of the Government in driving such men from France? It was a stupidity, a real stupidity, to say nothing else on the subject!"

The poet-monk of Frigolet is now in England, but his golden verse and his golden wine, can he, I wonder, make either in exile under our grey skies!

As we said good-bye and *au revoir* to our delightful hosts the poet's wife picked me a bunch of the briar rose. "The rose is the flower of England," she remarked, "your flower! But when you come in the spring I will give you the 'pervenche.'" She pointed to a bed of the shining polished leaves under the shade of a big tree. "For that is the flower of Provence, therefore the flower specially of the *Félibres*."

From the home of the Poet we drove on to Saint-Rémy, and, like the motor tourists, finished the day with a visit to the Arch and the Mausoleum, *les antiques*, as the country people call them.

Almost a kilometre from the little town they stand in solitary beauty at the foot of the Alpilles on a high green plateau, with a background of small dark pines, silvery and transparent olives, an occasional fig-tree and willow, and the little classic asphodel peering up from the carpet of grass.

These two exquisite monuments are all that remain

of the glory of ancient Glanum. But they speak eloquently of the past in their elegant and most melodious beauty, which time has spared with a tenderness shown to few monuments of the days of Julius Cæsar. The arch, some say, commemorates the victorious campaigns of Cæsar in Gaul and Britain, the sculptures showing triumphal cars riding ruthlessly over prostrate foes, both victor and vanquished having in many cases lost a head. Compared with the solid arches which the Romans left at Orange and elsewhere in Provence, it is like an exquisite little miniature, "altogether Greek in feeling," pronounced Dono Térésa, who has been here often with the learned antiquarians.

LES
ANTIQUES
OF SAINT-
RÉMY.

The Mausoleum is a fitting companion to the Arch. Covered with sculptures and inscriptions, its straight, dainty columns rise high into the blue and enclose two figures which stand side by side gazing out between the protecting columns over the plains towards the distant towers of Avignon. So they stand, calm and immovable even as the Lion d'Arles behind them, while the centuries roll by, cities rise and fall, and the generations of men rapidly succeed one another. The only other reminder of the ancient world on which they still gaze is the yellow asphodel in the grass below.

* * * * *

Since Dante was forced to be an exile from his own beloved country one feels glad he had, at all events, such a city as Arles to open her gates to him, Arles the beautiful, the queenly, which Constantine desired to make the capital of his great kingdom, the centre of all the Roman Empire. For long centuries she slept, like the Princess of the fairy tale. So long her sleep lasted the world forgot her, and, in spite of her wonderfully preserved beauty, declared her to be dead.

ARLES.

AWAKEN-
ING OF
THE FAIRY
PRINCESS.

Now, however, though no fairy Prince has wakened her with his kiss, it being too late for Princes, the Félibres poets have sung their sweet songs in her ear, and she has stirred and smiled in her sleep till people cease at least to say that she is dead. She has wakened even so far as to be conscious of pride in her glorious past and a noble patriotism in her present.

The Lion of the Alpilles, her guardian, also has come to life. He has shaken his mane, and rallied round him those sons of Arles who form the patriotic Félibres of the "École du Lion."

At Arles in 1852 took place the first congress of Provençal poets under Roumanille before even the founding of the Félibres. Since then Arles has shared with Avignon the nurture of Félibrige. She has been ever the Félibre's ideal city, the capital of their kingdom. Here Mistral founded his museum, visiting it regularly once a week, and holding on these occasions select little gatherings of the poets—small Félibrés, when Roumieux from Tarascon, Dom Xavier from his monastery at Frigolet, Alphonse Daudet from his mill at Fontvieille, Charloun Riéu from Paradou, and the Avignon poets, Roumanille, Aubanel and Félix Gras, were of this goodly company. Now, though the fêtes of Sainte-Estelle show an ever-increasing number of ardent Félibres, few, alas, of the great Master-builder's first fellow workers remain!

Mistral's museum at Arles is an ever-increasing collection of Provençal records and treasures. There can be seen the history of old Provence, her customs and traditions, the implements of the field, weapons of war, the furniture of the homes, the costumes, jewels and books. In one room is a life-sized group in wax commemorating Christmas Eve in a *mas* or farmhouse.

The father of the family is pouring a libation of wine over the log fire. Supper is spread on the table, which is laid with the regulation three homespun linen cloths one over the other, graduated in size. The supper is *maigre*, being the Eve of the Feast, but there is plenty to eat, fish, salads, olives, vegetables, fruits, the gorgeous Christmas cake, noble loaves of home-baked bread, a big jar of cherries preserved in brandy, and a big cask of red wine in the corner of the room. Over the high chimney-piece stands a figure of the Christ-child, blessing the scene. All the family are gathering round the table, the women in their charming Arlesienne dress and coif. The cowherd and shepherd are also of the party, including the sheep-dog, wearing his great collar of ferocious spikes which protect him from wolves and other foes. It is a perfect picture of the prosperous, happy life of the *mas*.

CHRIST-
MAS AT
THE
"MAS."

The smile of Arles is sweetest on Sunday. Then she stirs in her long sleep and opens soft, melancholy eyes full of the dreams of centuries. Through the big doors of the beautiful old cathedral, St. Trophime, the people pass in crowds for the *grand'messe*. Saint-Trophime with its wonderfully sculptured Gothic porch of which Mistral has sung one of his unforgettable songs, the "Communion des Saints"—St. Trophime where once kings and emperors were proud to receive their coronation. A perfect marvel of rigid apostles and saints guard the ancient doorway, and a cluster of cherubs' heads stud the vaulted arch where sits enthroned a figure of the Christ, one finger raised as if to arrest the attention of all who pass beneath.

Through the cool dim aisles we made our way to the sacristy and up the well-worn flight of stone steps to the

IN THE
CLOIS-
TERS.

cloisters, the ancient cloisters of St. Trophime, one of the spots most dearly loved and prized by the Félibres. And no wonder—the exquisite beauty and peace of this little enclosed corner of the old world comes upon one like a surprise. A veritable Sleeping Beauty hidden away in the heart of the city, a stone's throw from the busy market place, so perfect, so undisturbed by the long centuries that have rolled by since the days when mitred and crowned heads bent beneath the low lintel of the little Gothic door passing in splendid procession from cloisters to cathedral.

The garrulous old guide awaiting all new-comers at the entrance was the only disturber of our peace. He insisted on pointing out the beauties of each arcade, noting the variety of style and telling us the sculptured story of every arch. Many illustrious visitors had he conducted, with attention they had listened to his discourse! Monsieur Mistral's favourite point of view behold it here, where the tall tower of the "man of bronze" may be seen keeping watch, as it were, over the city. Monsieur Roosevelt also had made a point of viewing thoroughly these interesting cloisters and listening to their true history; for this purpose he had crossed the ocean and left the American Republic to look after itself for a time—a man of great intelligence that one!

In the market place outside groups of young men were displaying to interested friends and relations newly acquired cockades of tricolour, that symbol which proclaimed them recruits of the army of the Republic.

On the Promenade des Lices all Arles had turned out in Sunday best, the stately Arlesiennes looking like a procession of Greek goddesses, their dark

waving hair parted in the centre, looped up at the back of the head and crowned by the severe beauty of the velvet coif. The ruins of the great monastery of Saint-Césaire, the tower of Archbishop Roland, the noble rampart walls, the Roman arena and the long funeral avenue of the Aliscamps all meet at this point.

THE
ELYSIAN
FIELDS.

We turned from the gay promenade, down the long avenue of poplars which shade the ruined tombs and sarcophagus of that once famous cemetery where Dante wandered realising his vivid pictures of the Purgatorio and Inferno.

In the old pagan days it was said that this wonderful necropolis made Arles, the queen of cities, more opulent beneath her soil than above. "Arelas ditior sepulta quam viva," quoted my Félibre guide. Here the great Romans under Augustus and Constantine regarded it as their privilege to be buried. A few ruined remnants of their magnificence still show under the poplar trees, some of them turned to the base use of a bed for the homeless vagrant who, little considering the outraged shades of the mighty dead, has made himself comfortable inside with a good layer of hay and straw and moved the great id to allow his entrance.

Most of the great monuments of any value and beauty have long ago been removed to the greedy museums of Paris and Lyons, but in spite of the despoiling and desecration of the Aliscamps, the melancholy avenue seems to retain something of the pagan greatness of its past. It is not till one reaches the old church of St. Honorat to which the avenue conducts, and the walled cemetery in which it stands, that the Christian spirit overpowers the pagan. But the old poetic legends all feel true as the old guide tells in

ALL-
HALLOWS
EVE.

awed tones how St. Trophime, first Bishop of Arles, desiring to consecrate the pagan basilica and burying ground to the true God, and finding among the bishops he assembled none holy enough for the office, Jesus Christ Himself appeared on the night of All Saints' Festival and consecrated the church and Aliscamps. For centuries after, runs the legend, did the Christ return every year and celebrate the midnight mass in St. Honorat, surrounded by the past Bishops of Arles—good St. Trophime, he who had landed in Provence in company with Lazarus, Martha, and the three Saintes Maries at their head.

It is a strange little building, this St. Honorat, half Gothic, half Byzantine, with its Roman clock tower and solid walls from which a deadly damp exudes, chilling one through and through, as though the dead would clutch the living and draw them down to the Purgatorio, which Dante walking those same stones pictured here below the sod. It was a relief to come out into the fresh air and mellow autumn sunlight and walk in the funeral garden, where flowers and herbs grew in careless freedom over the old graves, reminding one by their sweet living presence that Mother Earth still had vitality and was not one vast graveyard.

Arles is full of sudden contrasts of light and shade. From the exquisite solitude of the cloisters of St. Trophime one steps into the market place full of youthful recruits. From the melancholy poplars and tombs of the Aliscamps into the lordly Roman arena, that magnificent record of builders who mocked at time, living testimony to the power and strength of military Rome.

Here on Sunday afternoons during the summer

months all the inhabitants flock to see the *courses de taureaux*. My Félibresse friend assured me for my peace of mind that this harmless amusement bears no more resemblance to the modern bull-fight of Spain than to the gladiatorial shows for which this vast arena was built in the days when fifty thousand people once lined these great rampart walls, and fifty thousand voices shouted their applause or displeasure.

THE BULL-FIGHT.

A funny little comedy is enacted every Sunday afternoon in the summer season. The *courses de taureaux* are forbidden by law. Oh yes, most certainly they are forbidden! So, the mayor in full pomp of sash and decorations walks in solemn state to the entrance of the arena and there, before the gay assembly, reads out the edict forbidding this entertainment in the name of the Law under penalty of an *amende*. Whereupon the master of the ceremony comes forward, alert and nimble, *amende* in hand, and presents the coin (a franc, I was told) to the majesty of the Law. Appeased as if by magic, that gentleman drops the *amende* into his pocket, and marches into the arena to take up an honourable and conspicuous position among the spectators.

"Everyone enjoys the entertainment, especially the bull," declares Dono Térèso. There are no unhappy horses to be gored, only proudly eager young toreadors with bright scarves to be played with. A certain amount of risk, but only enough to give piquancy and zest to the proceedings. "It is in our blood, we love the game, we others of Provence," said my Félibresse friend.

She explained the absence of the gory element in the bull-fights of Arles and Avignon by the fact that

FEASTS OF
SAINTE-
ESTELLE.

the Greek strain here is so far stronger than the Roman. At Nîmes, whenever they can afford it, they introduce horses; they love to kill their bull—they have no objection now and then to a human victim. But then Nîmes is Roman and Arles is Greek—the gladiators were of Rome, not Athens.

But more than anywhere else the spirit of Greece survives in the ruins of the beautiful little theatre with its Corinthian columns, so delicate and exquisite, suggesting what must have been the perfect beauty of the whole. Here was found the Venus of Arles, that formidable rival to the Venus of Milo, like many others of Arles' precious treasures, torn from her embrace to be placed in the Museum of the Louvre. Here in later days the *Félibres* have often celebrated their Feasts of Sainte-Estelle, Mistral, Aubanel Roumanille, reciting to an enthusiastic audience their patriotic odes and sonnets.

* * * * *

About seven miles from Arles, across the Crau, that Crau whose stones still witness to the great fight of Hercules, and across which poor little Mireille, heroine of Mistral's great epic poem, took her flight to the church of the Saintes-Maries, lies the little village of Paradou, the home of the Burns of Provence.

We drove through Montmajour, and passed the famous monastery perched high above the plains, in olden days often completely islanded by the constantly overflowing waters of the Rhone. The Montagnette of Tarascon stood out boldly on our left. I had been to Tarascon and paid my respects to Ste. Marthe and the Taresque, the big toy dragon, the day before. Our *cocher* had seemed to think the dragon of far more importance than Ste. Marthe. The two share the

honours of celebrities of Tarascon, though both have suffered from the spirit of the age. The old Noah's-ark-looking monster is no longer allowed his fête day and procession through the streets, and though the long-loved patron saint of Provence has many faithful who still visit the beautiful old tomb in her own church of Ste. Marthe, grave doubts have been cast by the caviling sceptic as to whether she ever landed in France at all. King René, who built the church in her honour, had no doubt about it, however, and he was much more in a position to judge than the modern caviller. The stern old fortress of this famous king still looks menacingly across the river to Beaucaire, no doubt regretful that the fighting days are over, and his rival, on the opposite bank, but a harmless ruin.

STE.
MARTHE
AND THE
TARASQUE.

Passing through Fontvieille our driver pointed out the mill of Alphonse Daudet, of three on the hill the only one still "marching," for, though not in working order the wind turned round its sails, as if protesting against death and desertion for the mill which gave birth to the celebrated "*Lettres de mon Moulin*." Fontvieille itself was *en fête*, for it was Sunday afternoon. Some of the young people were dancing under the trees to the sound of the fiddle, another group, young recruits with a gay, tricoloured *cocarde* stuck proudly in their hats, were playing bowls, a favourite game all over Provence.

In spite of the stones of Hercules, which take not only the form of gigantic rocks and boulders, but sprinkle the soil thickly for long stretches of miles, the plains of the Crau are fertile with oases of olive and vineyards, and rich with treasure of quarries of beautiful white stone, for which Hercules was not answerable.

A
DESOLATE
CITY.

Just before reaching Paradou we turned aside, and, winding up the steep mountain road of a spur of the Alpilles, made our pilgrimage, as in duty bound, to the grim ruins of Les Baux. A more God-forsaken spot it would be hard to find. Higher and higher we mounted the side of this great mountain gorge, and looking down from the summit upon the fantastic rocks and ruins, all heaped together, indistinguishable in their confusion and destruction, it was easy to believe that here, as tradition says, Dante saw one of the pictures he describes in his circles of the Inferno. Down at the entrance of the gorge on the plain our driver pointed out a small farmhouse which he told us was "the home of Mireille." Whether he was right or no I cannot say, but it is curious how this imaginary heroine of the great Provençal poet has taken her place in the hearts and minds of the people as though she were a historic character. She is as real to them as the Saintes Maries themselves.

In the heart of the ruins of Les Baux a squalid village hides itself out of sight. The inhabitants seem to exist for the purpose of waylaying travellers and begging from them—there is nothing else to do. They seem of a different race from the people of Provence, and have taken on the grey, crumbling look of the devastated ruins. It was strange to think that just on the other side of these barren Alpilles, following the narrow road between the steep towering rocks, in all their serene beauty and dignity, stood those perfect specimens of the old Greco-Roman world, "Les Antiques" of Saint-Rémy!

Paradou is a little stone village in the plains, grey, solid and respectable, utterly lacking in any touch of

the picturesque, or of the cosy, flowery brightness of the English village.

THE
BURNS OF
PROvence.

We enquired of a small group of villagers for the house of the poet. They came forward politely, eager to give us information about their celebrity, all speaking Provençal. Alas, the poet was absent, had left that day only, and would not be home till the following evening. But his brother was here—they would fetch him to speak with us.

The brother was called, and we made known our errand. Il Capoulié had sent us to hear the songs of the poet of Paradou. At the mention of the Félibre chief we took on an additional interest, not only in the eyes of the poet's brother but of all the listening bystanders.

To my question as to whether he also could sing, the brother of Charloun shrugged his shoulders hopelessly, helplessly. For him the poetry was a language he understood not, and to sing he knew not! "*Moun fraire*," he added with pride, "he was always different from we others; he understood the poetry, he loved it from a child. But he is not proud, *moun fraire*—Ah, no, he was never proud! Like me, he is a peasant; he works hard, just as we all work, lives as we live, no difference at all except his poems which he makes."

He asked if it would make us pleasure to see the house of Charloun and some of his books. "We live together since I have become widower," he explained, as we walked towards one of the cottages at the end of the main street, raised just above the roadside. A severe, plain, little four-walled house. Outside hung the key on a nail. He unlocked the door, and we entered the room, which was kitchen

A POET'S
CORNER.

and parlour in one. Very bare and plain was this "poet's corner," speaking eloquently of the hard, toiling life of the simple peasant. A dresser, scantily furnished, a small table or two, and a few chairs, a cupboard, nothing more. On the walls hung some photographs of the family, one of the poet in solemn funereal garb, but with a singularly cheerful face, full of vigour and intelligence. Not a book was to be seen, the only trace of Félibrige being the framed card of membership, pointing to the fact that Charloun had been elected a Félibre just thirty years ago.

A solitary *pot au feu* stood on the smouldering ashes in the wide chimney. One looked in vain for the bright copper pans and saucepans which generally lend such a cheery look to the French interior.

"The books of Charloun are in the bedroom upstairs—they are not many. I will fetch them," said his brother, mounting the little narrow wooden staircase which led to the room overhead.

He brought us the last edition of the "Chants du Terroir," a book including three volumes of poems, the first of which was published in 1884 with a preface in Provençal by Mistral; the second, "Nouveaux Chants du Terroir," in 1900, with a study of the author in French by Rougier; the third, "Des Derniers Chants du Terroir," in 1904, with a preface in French by Vèran. This last includes some of the old folk tunes of the country, dances, dirges, marches, to which the poet has set his songs as Burns did his to the old tunes of Scotland.

"From 1884 to 1900 did your brother the poet write nothing?" I asked.

"My faith but yes, he wrote always when by reason of the bad weather or some such cause it was

impossible to work out-of-doors; but my poor father and my poor mother, see you, they cared nothing for poetry—it annoyed them rather. So my brother he buried all he wrote in the ‘cartons’ he had upstairs. He dwelt then in the house by the church supporting the parents so long as they lived. When at last, ten years ago, my poor mother died—very old she was, very old, even as my poor father when he went—Charloun, as one might say, spread the wings.” With an expressive gesture the peasant brother stretched out his arms. “By that time he had already fifty years, the poor boy; he opened the cartons wherein lay the manuscripts of years and began to arrange his second volume. But he is not proud, my brother! Oh, no, he is not proud; still he works in the fields—works hard even as I work. In all his life he received only six months of school education here at Paradou. For we were a numerous family, ten children and poor—it was necessary Charloun should work and waste no more time in learning. He has taught himself all he knows. There are many who would be proud to be so honoured as Charloun has been by our great poet, Monsieur Mistral, and by many famous writers also, who write him letters and have even come here to Paradou expressly to visit him. It makes him pleasure, but he becomes never proud. Here are two medals, one of gold, a piece worth four louis!” He opened reverently a leather case. “Think you he cares for these—not the least in the world. Medals and such things make nothing to him!”

“And he has never married?” I asked.

“Ah, no—never. The women, the *cafés*, and all such things, he leaves them on one side,” said the brother, with a fine scorn. “The poetry, that is what

THE
POET'S
TWIN
SOUL.

interests him, only the poetry. He was made like that, see you, while I, his brother, and all of us were made quite the other way, to understand nothing, nothing of all that. See here his book, the 'Odyssey of Homer.' This he has translated into our language of Provence. Here is some of the manuscript." He showed us a manuscript in the finest, most delicate scholar's writing—a University hand! "And this also, 'Télémaque,' a great poem it appears, though for me I understand nothing of it. We were ten of us, brothers and sisters, but out of all that number one sister only resembled Charloun. She made no poems, but she could speak them, and she knew how to express the ideas. Oh, it was as if they two had another language from we others—but alas, she died, that one, while she was young!"

No doubt all great souls, whether poets, prophets or artists, are lonely—those who dwell on the mountain tops must needs be so—but let us hope such utter solitude is rare as this peasant poet must have known; denied even the society of those brothers whose hands were occasionally held out to him, because of the duty which bound him to his old parents, till youth and middle age were past.

"But you understand and love your brother's own songs?" I asked, this tragic case of the poet Charloun making the sun of Provence itself seem less bright.

"Ah yes, I understand, like the rest, most of the songs of Charloun, though I cannot sing them, I regret to say. They are our own songs, see you, made in the Provençal, not the French of other poets which we speak not. All the world here in Arles, in Avignon, Tarascon, Saint-Rémy, even so far as Nîmes and Marseilles, they sing the songs of Charloun and recite

his poetry. At the Feasts of Sainte-Estelle they make him to sing his songs, and the voices of three hundred will join in the chorus. Ah, that is what makes pleasure to my brother! It is a pity he is absent to-day—willingly he would have sung to you for an hour. It is truly a pity! But," he added hospitably, "these ladies will return, I hope, one day; my brother he comes back after to-morrow."

A LONELY
SOUL.

A pity! Indeed it was a pity. The word was pitifully inadequate to express the great disappointment. We assured him we hoped greatly to come back in two days' time, but even as I said it I felt a secret misgiving, a presentiment that all I should see of Charloun and hear of his songs, would be the shadow-figure conjured up by the peasant brother's words as we sat in the homely little kitchen, and the shadow-songs that seemed to echo round the walls.

We drove back to Arles as the sun sank down in a glory of red and gold, throwing lovely lights and shadows across the wide stretches of the Crau and the Carmargue, painting all violet the distant hills.

At least it was consoling to think that this peasant-poet had the country of Mireille for his home, the author of Mireille for his friend, and the Félibres of Provence for his brothers.

My presentiment proved only too right. A letter on my return to Arles told me that circumstances obliged Aunt Anne to be in Paris the following evening, and we must meet next morning in the train as it passed through Avignon. The letter began and ended, "Oh, my dear, I have had such an interesting time, and have never ceased wishing I had made you come with me instead of leaving you to potter about

A PRE-
CIOUS
CARGO.

those old Roman ruins and to go round seeing 'fébrile' poets or whatever curious name you call them."

To think of what, for lack of two or three more days, I must leave undone—Charloun and his songs, Nîmes and the exquisite little Maison Carrée and temple and baths of Diana—that wondrous Roman aqueduct, the Pont du Gard, and above all the little town of Orange, with its majestic Roman arch and amphitheatre! A third day and I could have made my pilgrimage in the footprints of Mireille across the Carmargue to Les Saintes-Maries, that village on the sea where the little bark full of Saints, tradition says, ran aground—St. Lazarus, St. Martha, the three Saint Marys, to say nothing of the aged St. Trophimus, Maximin, Martial and Saturnin, each worthy of the halo with which ancient art invests them. A precious cargo indeed, and what an honour for Provence! Marseilles claims Lazarus, Tarascon the active Saint Martha, while the bones of the three Maries, Marie-Madeleine, Marie-Jacobé and Marie-Salomé repose in the old Roman church by the sea, on the site of which in 540 stood Notre Dame de la Barque, according to the testimony of St. Césaire, Archbishop of Arles in those days.

Oh, the weeks and months that life deals out with lavish hand when one desires the days to speed and be few, and two little days not to be had at any price when every hour could be filled to the brim with joyful interest!

With these sad reflections, and leaving more than half my heart behind, I joined Aunt Anne in the Paris express, and waved a sad farewell to Dono Térésa and the sentinel cypress trees of Provence.

LIFE IN THE FOREST.

THOSE who desire to know the great forest in its many moods, to learn its secrets, to behold its beauty, and to become familiar with the inhabitants and their various haunts, will never do so by whirring through in a motor, delightful as it is to get the long clear run, straight as a die for two miles or so, on Denecourt's admirable forest roads. The avenues of tall trees arching overhead with their grateful shade, the smooth white road rolling up like a scroll under the flying wheels, and "Speed, speed on the wings of the wind"—this is all the forest has time to say to the motorist.

HAUNTS
OF THE
STAG.

Those who drive in more slow and dignified fashion with horse and carriage are more blest than these. They have leisure to see the lovely glades and side paths—too narrow for them to explore, it is true, but they hear the passing note of a bird, and see between the trees the glow of purple heather and golden bracken, while the sweet scent of the pines reaches them unmixed with petrol and dust.

To know the forest, however, as the stag, the squirrel, and bird know it, is only given to those who go on foot, or on horseback, or on a silent, swift bicycle, which latter has the advantage over a four-footed friend, that you can leave it to rest against a tree while dismounting and climbing some rocky point of view. With a free wheel, all sense of

FOREST
BY-WAYS.

exercise ceases; you skim along smoothly and noiselessly as a swallow on the wing. Even the nervous, keen-eared stag does not hear the rubber tyre, and you slow down to watch him as he stoops to drink his morning or evening draught at the Mare aux Fées or Mare de Franchard.

Aunt Anne, who prefers either the dignified carriage or the slow and sure method of walking, denies absolutely the advantages I claim for a bicycle. This is but natural, and I found it best not to mention when these special privileges fell to my lot.

Gertruda, who, as usual, soon had a devoted chauffeur in tow, in spite of the comparative seclusion of the little village of Marlotte, meekly but firmly maintained that the fullest enjoyment of the forest could be known only to the motorist. It was "*prachtvoll*," "*reizend*," "*entzuckend*." "The heavenly air as you flew along between the pines, like draughts of nectar it seemed, the pictures of rocks, lakes, glens, chasms, unrolled themselves before you like a series of beautiful cinematographs." Gertruda is full of poetic ideas.

To me the forest was a fascinating picture-book—a book of endless variety, in which every fresh page showed a new scene wherein one read a new tale. Now deep in the shade of a pine-forest on a steep mountain side, recalling the lovely Swiss country of Zienal or Arolla, an undergrowth of bracken and heather for miles on either hand. Then suddenly, with a bend in the road, the scene alters, and here is a glade of silvery beech trees, tall, slender-stemmed, with foliage delicate as lace work, a haunt for fairies and wood nymphs, where the sunlight dances through the branches and plays on the silver bark, while moss

and harebells form a carpet under foot. At one of the "round points" marked in the centre by an ancient cross or obelisk, from which radiate half-a-dozen or more forest roads, take that to Apremont and again the landscape changes—broken rocky ground, deep gorges and chasms, lacking only a trickling brown burn to place you in the heart of the rugged Highlands. Huge boulders piled high, and flung about as though giants had been at play, or perhaps at war. Further on, the dense growth of trees again, and, just when you least expect it, a vast silvery *mare*, silent, mysterious, deeply shadowed by the encircling trees, suggesting something vaguely tragic as you come upon it suddenly out of the warm colour and sunlight.

HISTORIC
SPOTS.

The very names of the forest rocks, roads, glens and lakes are full of suggestion, and conjure up romances of gallant kings, mighty huntsmen, beautiful princesses, druids, dragons, wolves, fairies, and even salamanders. "Gorge aux Loups," "Mare aux Fées," "Rocher de la Salamandre," "Mail Henri IV.," "Belvédère des Druides," "Carrefour de la Vallière," sweet Louise of the tender heart, whose presence still haunts the "Route de la Chevrette." The "Avenue Maintenon" straightens one up again—that lady spared no tags, and no fair Louises either.

Venus, Orpheus, Calypso, Vulcan, all have at one time haunted these woods, not forgetting Lucifer himself, to whom is assigned a suitable dark and damp grotto.

The ancient Croix de St. Herem recalls a celebrated meeting between Napoleon and Pope Pius VII., and the characteristic scene which took place, the wily "*petit caporal*" and the diplomatic Pope both pretending they met as friends, and ignoring the patent fact

THE
"GALE-
RIE" OF
ROSA.

that one was spider and the other fly. When it came to entering the carriage which was to conduct the fly into the spider's parlour at Fontainebleau, the comedy reached a climax. Neither would cede the right of precedence to the other, so the difficulty was settled Solomon-wise by both stepping in at the same moment from the right and left sides of the Imperial carriage.

One of the seven roads which meet at the "round point" of this famous "Croix," leads before long into the Galerie de Rosa Bonheur. The name suggests an exhibition of magnificent lions and tigers on canvas, rather than the lovely avenue of tall, slender, rainbow-coloured beech trees which it really stands for. Far as the eye can see they arch overhead in a line straight as that from the Tuileries to the Arc de Triomphe, and on either side the forest, the endless, ever-varying forest, with its rich carpet of burnished bracken and golden leaves; a fitting habitation for Titania and her attendant fairies.

This was where the great artist loved to take her morning and evening ride, her favourite spot in the forest which was for so many years her home. Dressed in the eminently sensible and comfortable costume which man has appropriated exclusively for himself, but to wear which the French Government gave that favoured woman a special dispensation, astride on the horse she knew and loved as the best of friends, with her short, thick, white hair, and the soft felt hat shading her square, strong, kindly face, so curiously resembling both Victor Hugo and Michelet, the manly figure of Rosa Bonheur was familiar a few years ago to every wood-cutter and forester in these parts.

At the end of the beech tree *galerie* of Rosa Bonheur, with a sudden turn the forest breaks and opens on the villages of By and Thomery. The château and garden, a large slice of the forest presented by the French Government to the great Rosa, stand on the outskirts of By, enclosed by a high white wall, this last a most necessary precaution in her life time, since her pet companions were lions, tigers, and panthers, to whom she gave a free run of house and grounds.

We had succeeded in finding quarters after our heart's desire in a little house at Marlotte, on the very edge of the forest. The trees brushed our windows, and the golden leaves blew in and strewed the floors. Leaning out of my bedroom window, I could see the moonbeams playing upon the beech tree beneath which Murger sat and wrote his "*Vie de Bohême*."

We were living a sort of "*Vie de Bohême*" ourselves, not in the sense of Murger's Bohemians, but as near as possible to the gipsy's ideal of freedom and fresh air.

One night at the inn had proved enough for Aunt Anne, though she had unfeignedly enjoyed the *table d'hôte* dinner in company with some thirty to forty artists and art students in the *salle à manger*, the walls of which were entirely covered with their handiwork, mementos left often in payment of the bill. Some of these frescoes were very clever, and most of them original; many, as our landlord pointed out with pride, were signed with names since become famous.

This was a farewell dinner to many of *Messieurs les artistes*, who were departing on the morrow, the

MIGRA-
TORY
BIRDS.

season being over, and the great master, whose studios attract so many, himself about to depart in a few days. "*Messieurs les artistes* are migratory birds, and return to Marlotte only with the butterflies and flowers," said our landlord.

From our small table in the corner of the room we studied these strange birds, their plumage and note highly interesting to us, who knew them only as depicted on the stage.

We saw none of our own countrymen. All appeared to be French except one little group of fair-haired men and women, whose nationality was manifest even before they joined in the toasts with their hearty "*Skål-Skål*."

The company kept dropping in at all hours during the meal, and each new arrival was greeted with fresh cheers and laughter, and in language the gaiety and good humour of which was often the only thing intelligible to us. They broke into song as readily as into speech, drinking and clinking glasses to each other's success and to the next merry meeting. But they were very well conducted birds, and never made us feel we ought not to be there.

Aunt Anne was fascinated. Had she been without a chaperon I am convinced she would have joined in the choruses and soon been the object of a general toast.

They kept it up long after we retired, and their voices echoed down the village street as they dispersed to their various quarters, many going off to the annex of the inn.

Next morning, by a great stroke of luck, we lighted on some rooms which the owner desired to let for just the fortnight we required them, leaving us also her *bonne-à-tout-faire* to cook and do for us.

Elise proved a jewel, and owing to this rare combination of perfect weather, perfect scenery, and perfect freedom from domestic care, life assumed an almost idyllic aspect.

HOME OF
THE CHAS-
SELAS.

All day we lived in the forest, driving, walking, sketching, reading, and, above all, "lazing" (quite the best occupation for such surroundings)—lunching from the well-filled basket provided by Elise, under the shade of some wide-spreading tree or perched on some rocky height. In this manner we grew to know the great forest, and she unfolded to us some of her secrets, secrets she hides from those who seek her only for the chase, but reveals to the dwellers in the greenwood, the wood-cutters, the guardians, the poachers even, of whom there are not a few, and, above all, to the rightful owners themselves, the birds and beasts of the forest.

One day we spent in the villages of the Chasselas, By and Thomery. They are united by a long walled road hung with vines, and are like places in a fairy tale.

Beautiful purple and golden grapes (the famous Chasselas) decorate the walls of every house and every shed. The village streets are lined with vine-covered walls, and wherever a wall can be built, at right angles and corners, more vines and more are planted. The gardens also are filled with vines on stakes, long, straight rows, closely packed as though reluctant to waste an inch of precious mother-earth of this sunny hillside on the borders of the Seine.

Needless to say, no one is poor in this Land of the Vine. The whole place is parcelled out between prosperous peasant proprietors. "At By and Thomery," said our driver, "every one owns a horse," a

FATE OF
THE CHAS-
SELAS.

possession which at once indicates the position on the social ladder. It is a curious fact that these grapes by the roadside, though of good market value, being dessert and not wine grapes, are never stolen. Imagine a village an hour from London, with a convenient railway station ready to hand, keeping its wealth of valuable fruit hanging in the open streets and lanes. In the closed vineyards the Thomery people employ dogs at night, but this is the only means taken to protect their property.

Our visit to Thomery was for the express purpose of buying grapes to send home to England, but we found none of the villagers anxious to sell. It was the middle of October, and nearly all the Chasselas were gathered; only a few black grapes remained still hanging. The Chasselas, each bunch cut with a good stalk, were being stowed in their winter quarters, shut away from the sweet air and light in darkened rooms, their stalks in small bottles of water, rows upon rows on shelves round the walls, and suspended from the ceilings. The whole of the upper floor of most houses in Thomery is devoted to this purpose, and the grapes will last till April or May, if needful, in this dismal prison, selling during the winter months for as much as eight or ten francs a pound. In October one can buy the finest quality for one franc a pound, and those of an ordinary, though most excellent kind, can be had in the Paris markets for half that price. Not, however, Chasselas from By and Thomery, and nothing less than these would content us. So having tried three polite but superbly independent village proprietors, we made our way to one of the large nursery gardens. Here we spent two hours choosing gifts for Aunt Anne's divinity and arranging for their

expédition to England, no easy matter, as Aunt Anne insisted on buying a specimen of every beautiful thing she saw, the gardener who showed us round luring her from one temptation to another. Wondrous giant chrysanthemums, surprising as those of the *Blumengarten* in "Parsifal"—dwarf Japanese trees counting their years with the centenarians—fascinating little vines in pots for table decoration, about two feet high, bearing two or three monster bunches of muscat grapes—and crimson apples emblazoned by the sun with the armorial bearings and crests of the aristocratic purchasers for whom they were destined.

THE SUN
AS
DRAUGHTS-
MAN.

With these last Aunt Anne was enchanted. She gave an order for next summer's sun to stamp the entwined initials of Victoria-Beatrice upon three dozen red-gold apples. "It looks like a gift from *le bon Dieu* Himself when the sun is employed as draughtsman," she turned with enthusiasm to the gardener.

But that gentleman was inclined to protest against the credit being entirely bestowed upon Providence.

"*Ma foi !* But it is not only *le bon Dieu* who works at this affair. Madame must know it requires the greatest skill to arrive at a result thus perfect. One must adjust the paper design with much care, protecting it from wind and rain, taking pains also that the apple is always rightly posed towards the sun while ripening—not easy that—*le bon Dieu* He gives the sun, but no further assistance."

The market was just over and the last stalls were being packed up when we made our way to the garden of the little inn at Thomery for *déjeuner*.

Market carts had come in from Bourron, Marlotte, Champagne, Nemours, and all the country round.

THE
EARLY
BIRD.

Their owners found a ready custom among these prosperous vine-growers, and looked well satisfied with their morning's work. We recognised a friend from Marlotte in the vendor of butter, chickens and eggs, just starting homewards in her two-wheel *charrette*. She greeted us with a wide grin, and "*Hé, bonjour, Mesdames* ; but you are late for the market. It is at eight o'clock these ladies might have made good affairs."

"I hope you yourself have made good affairs, my dear Madame Gobard ?" said Aunt Anne.

"Thanks to the sainted Virgin, to whom I never fail to present a candle the eve of market day, I have not done badly," conceded Madame Gobard, half closing her shrewd brown eyes with an expressive gesture, which made me doubt whether we should have made "good affairs" even at eight o'clock in the morning with anyone so wide awake.

Her next speech showed me the injustice of my thought.

"If it would make Mademoiselle pleasure, I will conduct her one day to a market really gay—Nemours, for instance, if Mademoiselle will be ready to start at half-past six o'clock. I take there the four speckled fowl so soon as they are ready to sell, and I will buy for these ladies all that they require, and at half the price they themselves would pay, even including my little profit," she laughed.

I accepted this offer with alacrity, Aunt Anne saying she would come on later in the day, for dearly as she loves a market, rising at dawn does not smile on her.

Our friend Madame Gobard is a good specimen of the small peasant proprietor. She has a little house

at Marlotte with a *basse cour* in front, where dwell her chickens, a pig, a dog, with a shed at the side for Hercule, the gaunt, bony old horse, and the market cart. Her house consists of five "pieces" on the ground floor, *en suite*, with a loft above for wood and forage. The kitchen, in which all the work of the day is done, shows no attempt at order or beauty; but the two bedrooms and two small sitting-rooms are models of cleanliness and order, while the linen sheets and spring mattresses would put to shame most country hotels in England.

A MODEL
MOTHER.

Mme. Gobard has married her two daughters and a son, and given to each a pretty little *dot*. She and her "old one" live alone, but work as though they were starting life instead of finishing it, and always "for the children," that they may leave them as much as possible. Madame Gobard, besides her chicken and egg business, does a good trade in butter, which she receives in big hampers twice a week from Touraine, and Brittany and resells at the markets of Nemours, Fontainebleau, Thomery, and other places within the power of Hercule's strong legs.

She is a good Catholic, and always attends the *grand'messe* on Sunday in cap and gown, suitably *endimanchée*. Her politics are as soundly practical as her religion. She disapproves of the present Government, as not only against *le bon Dieu* and the Church, but even worse if possible, detrimental to *les bonnes affaires*: "*Les Sœurs et les Frères* were very good clients, see you, for however pious one is, one must eat! Now everywhere the religious houses stand empty and desolate."

Bidding our friend *au revoir à bientôt*, that is so soon as the four speckled fowls should be fit for Nemours,

we drove back to Marlotte through Champagne and Moret along the banks of the Loing. After leaving Champagne a curious change came over the villages—no more vines and no more prosperity, outwardly at least.

We passed rows of small wooden huts in a bare field, windowless huts with one small door, looking like sheds for workmen's tools till we noticed the swarms of small, grimy children running in and out, and on inquiring from our driver learnt that these were the houses of the *mariniers*, or bargemen who ply their barges up and down the Seine and Loing. "A curious people the *mariniers*," said our driver. "My faith, but a well-conducted pig, he would decline to live in the family of a bargeman."

After even a passing glimpse of those poor, tattered, grimy infants one could well believe this. Yet how picturesque and decorative the great barges looked, slowly floating up the Loing as we entered Moret; even the tattered brown infant, sitting dangling bare feet over the prow, made a charming picture viewed in this his right setting.

The old church of Moret is so beautiful outside, involuntarily one opens the door and enters. This is a mistake. Inside it is tawdry and vulgar, no repose for eyes or spirit; of the outside beauty and dignity no trace is to be found. The thirteenth century is responsible for the exterior, the nineteenth for the interior. So much for the progress of ecclesiastical art.

The nuns at Moret, though now forced to be secularised, still continue the manufacture of their famous "*sucre d'orge*." The Sister, who sold to us at about four times the price that barley sugar costs in England, was a lady of stern Jesuitical

appearance. She combined with a curiously meek attitude an inflexibly determined tone of voice, and when she remarked that though the Church was going through a period of persecution at present she had no fear for the future, as the Church always rose up dominant, one experienced the feeling of an enormous power of passive resistance.

A
REINCAR-
NATED
ARTIST.

We ended the day with a visit to the great Master who has made of Marlotte another Barbizon. His students had all dispersed for the winter; we had assisted at their farewell dinner, but many, he told us, were following him to Rome. There on the Campagna he found again the sun, needful as the very breath of his life to this sun-loving native of Algiers. "*Là-bas*," he said, "I can work, for it is the land of inspiration—one breathes it in with the air."

The diversity of his gifts is amazing. He has been rightly called a modern Benvenuto Cellini.¹ Pictures, frescoes, enamelled caskets, triptyches, vases, jewels of antique form, copper work, and silver and gold wrought into wondrous and beautiful forms; all these may be seen in this magician's workshop.

"It is not fair, Monsieur, that you should have so many gifts. You can't have time to use them all, and oh! how glad I should be to have just one—the smallest even," cried Aunt Anne.

But which was the smallest, it would have been difficult to say, for there were no small gifts to be detected anywhere, the same great artist spirit showing itself in all his work.

He regretted we had not come to see him sooner, for his *ménage* was now all disorganised, making ready for an immediate flight to the south. All

ACROSS
THE
FOREST.

through the summer we should have found him at home on Sunday, for that was his day of relaxation and of fête. Then his friends came out from Paris to spend the day, a goodly company of artists, poets, actors, musicians—"all the varieties," he laughed, adding hospitably that we must come another year—very surely we must come! "One sings, one makes music, one plays the comedy à l'improviste, one amuses oneself well, I promise you."

* * * * *

From the living Master of Marlotte I went next day to visit the home of the departed Master of Barbizon, for still his spirit haunts the place, changed though it is so greatly since his day. Aunt Anne, true to her principles of "live dogs" rather than "dead lions," went off to the market of Fontainebleau, taking Gertruda well equipped with baskets and string-bags for purchases. Friends from a *château* some ten miles off were coming next day to picnic with us in the forest, and Elise was desirous of excelling herself in the cold *déjeuner*. A grand opportunity for the marketers.

So with an artist friend from the neighbouring village of Grez-sur-Loing as my guide, and mounted each on a good steel steed, we sped through the gold and green glades, and along the smooth roads, with the ease of birds on the wing.

We made little *détours* to see "points of view," and to pay our respects to some of the famous forest giants, many of whom are, alas, passing away. The veteran Pharamond, however, still stands like a huge column, all branches gone save a few at the top, which he wears proudly like a green aigrette. Jupiter, too, the great elm, suffers silently his "*Götterdämmerung*," while his brother lies prone a few yards off,

where some years ago he fell, roots up, from sheer old age. His body is treated with respect. I was glad to see notices forbidding him to be climbed upon or his bark to be cut with the names of the vulgar tourist.

THE FALL
OF CLOVIS.

At Franchard we stopped to lunch among the rocks and caves, inhabited in turn in the olden days by holy hermits and unholy brigands. It was a grand site for gentlemen of both professions. Where once stood the famous monastery of Franchard, there is now adjoining the ruins, a restaurant. But it is closed in October, so we were spared all sign of the tourist as we sat and refreshed ourselves by the quaint little fountain bearing the date 1148, and read the following words of warning:—

"L'eau de notre fontaine
N'est ni bonne à boire
Ni bonne à voir."

Quite true, we made no doubt, as far as the first assertion went, but no one would deny beauty to the little stream trickling with its silvery tinkle over the moss-grown stones.

Further on we came to the Gorge d'Apremont, scene of the great fire, where acres lie desolate and charred, the trees still standing, showing blackened stems, specially at the roots, for the cruel flames crawled along the ground, fed by the dry grass and undergrowth, coiling their red tongues round the base of their poor victims, and only occasionally leaping up to devour the tree to its height. It was so the great Clovis fell, burnt clean through at his base, as though cut by the woodman's axe.

Descending the steep road from the heights of the Apremont rocks, we came down into the smiling,

"LE
GRAND
RUS-
TIQUE."

sunny village of Barbizon, no longer the quiet little street of low-roofed stone cottages sleeping in the heart of the country on the forest's edge, as it was when Père Ganne started his first little inn, and Rousseau, Corot, Diaz, and Millet had the place to themselves. Barbizon has now many hotels boasting all the newest inventions, and alas, a steam tram connects it with Melun. The little street of peasants' low-roofed stone cottages has grown to a long road of villas and artists' houses in well-kept gardens. Barbizon is a fashionable summer resort! Still, it is not difficult to see through all these latter-day changes Millet's Barbizon of fifty years ago; for the forest is there, and the great wide plain stretching far away to the west. Still the peasants go forth to sow and plough, to reap and glean, still bow their heads in prayer as the *Angelus* rings at sunset—just as the great master pictured them.

A high wall in the village street shuts in the house and garden where Millet dwelt for thirty years. We were admitted by the old gardener, who warned us on the threshold that if we had come to see the pictures usually on view in the studio, pictures by Diaz, Corot, Rousseau, as well as by Millet, our pilgrimage was in vain, for they were all away at the varnisher's "for the moment."

The only thing he could show us from the hand of the Master was a set of plates with pencil designs ready for painting. These, though interesting, did not recall the work of "*le grand Rustique*," as he loved to designate himself, and one could only regret those pictures in the clutches of the terrible varnisher.

There was little trace anywhere of Jean François Millet. The cottage has all been changed, the

dining-room and studio are the only rooms now left of the little one-storied stone building with tiled roof, described by Millet in his letters to his friend Sensier. Even the vines he planted and the gay shrubs and flower-borders which gave him such keen joy, all are uprooted and destroyed. The walls of the *atelier* are bare, those walls which once spoke so eloquently of his life—covered as they were with heads of peasants, profiles of friends, favourite mottoes, flying thoughts caught on the wing by the Master's brush, some gay, some sad; here a chalk drawing, dashed in by his friend Rousseau, there a grand forest tree half suggested by the hand of Diaz, and near the fireplace the names and heights of all this elect little company of close friends and neighbours.

THE OLD
STUDIO.

When Madame Millet, thirteen years after her husband's death, was uprooted from this beloved home on the expiration of her lease, the son of Millet obliterated all trace of these precious records of his father's "*Vie intime*," dreading that what was so sacred to his mother and himself should fall into the cold hands of strangers. So related my artist guide as we stood in the bare studio, and pictured what it must have looked when the fine strong figure of the Norman peasant-artist stood at his easel, working out his inspired ideas, while Rousseau, Diaz or Corot sat in the old armchair near the door watching him and discussing their ideas and ideals regarding art.

In the garden, or rather orchard, in which the house stands, and which is bordered by the forest, the old gardener led us to a rough stone seat beneath the shade of an apple tree. "Here also he used to sit and paint and often watch the sun go down," said our guide. "He worked hard, that one, for he was poor,

BENEATH
THE
APPLE
TREE.

very poor, even to the day he died. Always he paid rent for this house, it was not even his own; that he regarded always as a great reproach—it troubled him much."

Here at last one came in touch with the real life of Jean François Millet. The apple tree and the old stone seat were unchanged save for the winters that had passed over them. One looked out on the same wide stretch of country he painted in his "Angelus," "Sowers," and "Gleaners," and on the same dark forest trees that form the protecting wall at the edge of his field. What hours of sorrow, anxiety and suffering he lived through in the little house yonder, but here beneath the apple tree, visions and inspirations must have come to him, lifting him into that seventh heaven which opens only to the great seers, whether musicians, painters, poets, or prophets.

On the opposite side of the road a son of Millet still lives. "He also paints," said the old gardener, "but not like his father; that one was strong, oh," but very strong—above all, as *amateur de tableaux*."

One cannot imagine the word "amateur" used in an odder connection, to English ears at least; it is so hard for us to dissociate it from the very different meaning conveyed in French.

The body of Millet rests in the little cemetery of Chailly, close to the church where for generations the inhabitants of Barbizon have gone to be christened, married and buried. He is next to his great friend Rousseau, who preceded him by many years, and to the wife who stood so bravely by his side during the thirty years of struggle with poverty, disappointment and sorrow, which were his in even greater degree than falls to the ordinary lot of the pioneer and

revolutionist in art. "The trees he planted on the grave of Rousseau now shade them all three," said my friend. "He had the simple funeral of a peasant as he desired, but all the confraternity of painters, poets and writers, to whom he had come as a strong angel with a torch to lighten their darkness and fill their hearts with new hope and courage, followed weeping to that little grave on the hill."

I was content not to visit the spot. It is impossible to think of Jean François Millet, that spirit so vital, so intensely alive, as connected in any way with a cemetery, however picturesque. If he revisits this world at all, it must be to wander in his beloved forest, or perhaps to sit on the old stone seat at sunset, gazing out over the familiar plains as the peasant toilers, with whom he had such sympathy and understanding, wend their homeward way.

* * * * *

Madame Gobard did not forget her promise to take me to the market at Nemours. One day Elise greeted me with the news that the old dame had been round to say the four speckled fowls were ready, and she would call for me next morning at half-past six.

A DRIVE
WITH
HERCULE.

Never was a vehicle so conspicuous for an entire absence of springs or other luxurious fittings as that two-wheel *charrette* of Madame Gobard, yet seldom have I enjoyed a drive more, in spite of the presence of those four poor speckled ones in their basket at our feet, going to their doom like the victims of the Revolution in a shaky tumbril.

The morning was superb, sweet, fresh and dewy as a rose which shakes out its petals in the early breeze. Everything was radiant with colour, the vivid, blue sky, the red and yellow forest, and the carpet of

A WISE
WOMAN.

green that bordered the road. The newly-risen sun smiled with satisfaction on it all. To think that God makes such mornings, and that we waste them in bed! The birds and beasts are wiser, and so is Madame Gobard, for in spite of her steady eye to *les bonnes affaires*, she is not blind to the beauty of the world in which it is her good fortune to conduct her business. She even pointed out his blessings to Hercule, and kept up a running commentary with him on his manner of conducting himself and us.

"How then, animal—is this the way one commences on a fine morning? Is it a funeral procession, thinkest thou? Head of calf! Again must one tell thee to pick up thy legs of a toad lest thou leave them on the road. *Voyons donc*, Hercule, my friend—march then, old brigand."

The ears of Hercule bent backwards and forwards; without the encouraging voice of his mistress his pace instantly slackened. There is no doubt that he understood her language, and though she kept up a lively conversation with me it was interspersed with these constant reminders to Hercule.

Beside the four fowls, who, Madame Gobard assured me, in spite of their cramped quarters, were "amusing themselves well," we had a good supply of golden butter from Touraine, some of a lesser quality from Brittany, and a large basket of fresh eggs.

"Mademoiselle will see, I shall return the baskets empty, the pocket filled," she observed with the confidence born of experience.

"Forget not that to sell your goods even at the smallest profit is better than to make the return journey with them. Some people have the ideas too

exalted—those there make never good affairs. ‘Better A STRONG ROMANCER is a chicken in the pot than a goose on the wing?’” Such was Madame Gobard’s sound policy.

As we passed through Bourron to pick up two large grey geese which Madame Gobard had promised to sell for a friend in return for a little *bénéfice*, I saw a notice announcing a sale on the following day, when among other objects of art and antiquity, a bureau, once the property of Alfred de Musset, would be sold. George Sand and Alfred de Musset, they, too, were once familiar figures in this part of the forest. Further on we passed the house where Balzac lived and wrote so many of his novels. It was not an inspiring-looking dwelling, but constructed on the dull, plain pattern of a chest of drawers, backed by dark groups of trees, with a lawn in front, and never a flower within sight.

“He was very strong for the romances—there have existed few who could equal our writer Balzac,” remarked Madame Gobard with an air of proud ownership, as she pointed to the white house with her long whip. “Though for my part,” she added, with characteristic honesty, “I leave aside all romances good and bad; they concern not those who must work, and for whom life is a serious affair, see you.”

I endeavoured to argue this point, but with as much success as had I tried to change the course of the sun. That life could be a serious affair for me, for instance, who went to market for the sole object of diversion, she refused to admit.

“Life, it is serious for those only who have made the acquaintance of the hunger—or would make it quickly if they did not toil. For others life is a

THE
FRENCH
PEASANT.

bagatelle, in spite of all Mademoiselle may say to the contrary."

Still, Madame Gobard allowed things were better now than formerly for the peasant. "When I was a child," she said, "I lived with my grandmother. She had passed through the Revolution in her youth. I remember well all she used to recount to me. The peasants were slaves then. Now they are proprietors, they own their land. One works quite as hard, without doubt, but it is for oneself at least, not for a master who eats up your life. To pay rent to another for the roof over one's head, that is a thing to make a man who respects himself ashamed."

I thought of Jean François Millet, and how bitterly he had felt this very thing—his fine old peasant grandmother having constantly reiterated this doctrine from his youth up.

As we passed through Grez, with its picturesque bridge so beloved of the artist there is never a *salon* without it, and Larchant, with its beautiful old church, other market carts began to appear on the road. Some of the owners greeted Madame Gobard as an old acquaintance, all wished us a friendly good morning, except a rather cranky-looking pair of old crones who looked askance at me, one of them interjecting something, I imagine, of a scornful nature to Madame Gobard about her companion. Owing to the absence of any teeth in her head, I was unable to understand, but Madame Gobard hurled after her a strong recommendation to mind her own affairs, and specially her rather precarious seat, for both old bodies were perched on chairs placed in their high *charrette*, and, as they jolted along, seemed to have no firmer tenure than a

couple of old withered leaves which a breath might blow away.

IN THE
AVENUE
OF
POPLARS.

The warning, much to Madame Gobard's satisfaction, proved not unnecessary. Just as we were driving down the stately avenue of "talking poplars," as R. L. Stevenson has so aptly named them, and I was mentally agreeing with his verdict that not a nobler road could be found than that entrance to Nemours, a hooting automobile rushed by in a cloud of dust, and in the same moment a shrill scream of "*Au secours!*" reached us from behind. We turned and beheld one old dame lying in the dusty road, her chair upside down by her side, while the other struggled with the horse, who had swerved to the side of the road, tilting one wheel on to a heap of stones, and bidding fair to overturn the *charrette*.

I sprang down, fearing the old lady was killed, for she lay like a log, but on my raising her up I was relieved to hear her pour forth a torrent of exceedingly forcible language on those accursed inventions, *les automobiles*, and their still more accursed drivers. Wonderful to say, she was not even hurt. I came to the conclusion she must have had considerable experience in falling, po old soul. She and her daughter—they were alike as twins, but this was in fact the relationship—were soon reinstalled, jogging along quite happily again, and with, I am glad to say, a much more kindly feeling for Madame Gobard's companion than before.

The market place was an animated scene—ducks quacking, women wrangling, babies yelling, carts arriving on all sides, their owners unloading and setting out their goods in the bright October sunshine.

"LA TÊTE
DURE."

Madame Gobard took up her position between an old lady with vegetables and cheeses and a man with a large family of white ducks. She remarked she was well placed, for, said she, "My neighbour here with the ducks is like most of the men, a bad marketer; he has the *tête dure*, and likes not to abate his price and be accommodating. His ducks, which are good enough, will bring customers to whom I shall sell these geese. On the other side, those who buy cheeses from the 'old one' will desire also butter—and here behold it."

How well Madame Gobard knew her *monde* was shown by the accurate fulfilment of her prophecy before the end of the day. It was not until all the speckled fowls and the pair of grey geese had been sold that her neighbour of the *tête dure*, seething with inward wrath and vexation, made the inevitable reduction and got rid of two of his noisy family at the eleventh hour to avoid the disgrace of conducting them all home again. Then Aunt Anne, arriving late on the scene, having been detained by her usual category of thrilling adventures, hearing the tragic tale of the *tête dure*, though she did not require ducks, purchased another pair of the remaining eight and threw in with the very welcome francs some sound advice, which was somewhat sulkily received, being exactly that which Madame Gobard had given him on triumphantly packing up her empty baskets shortly before.

I found Aunt Anne in a mood of bitterness against the French nation. A mood induced by a little scene she had just witnessed at the boot stall further down in the market place.

"I should like to prosecute them for cruelty to that

child," said Aunt Anne, pointing in the direction of a small boy; "this French economy is in most cases nothing more than miserliness and avarice, my dear Felicity. I prefer spendthrifts like the English. You see that child; look at his boots."

A VICTIM
OF
ECONOMY.

We were close to him now, and I noticed that the small boy seemed to have on exactly the same sized boots as the man whose hand he was holding, awkward clumping, heavy boots they were, too.

"I came up, hearing a lively altercation," said Aunt Anne, "between the boy's *bonne* and the parents, evidently quite well-to-do *bourgeois*. Several people were listening, the saleswoman was siding with the parents against the *bonne*, who was urging the mother to buy boots to fit the unhappy boy, or to leave him barefoot. 'The poor little one cannot drag his feet along,' she said. 'Not at all, they are very well, these boots,' said the mother; 'he grows fast, and they will serve also for next year, see you.' The father and grandmother both agreed, saying, 'the idea was very practical.' Practical! They are the most unpractical people under the sun," pronounced Aunt Anne.

As Madame Gobard and I drove back to Marlotte we met a group of women coming from the forest who seemed to have stepped straight out of one of Millet's pictures. They were returning from gathering wood and sticks, and were all heavily laden with gigantic loads on their backs, a pad of bracken at their necks to protect them from the sharp ends of the wood.

"The law permits them to take all they can carry in the hand or on the back," said Madame Gobard; "but no cart or barrow may be used. It is a *bénéfice*

FOREST
LAWS.

for the poor only, or at least those who one supposes to be poor," she added with a laugh. "See the old Madame Bouton, she is a proprietor and might well rest tranquil by the corner of the fire, but she works to gain still a few more *sous* for the children and grandchildren." She pointed to a frail-looking old bent body, with a face the same colour as the burnt bracken at her back, not only weighed down by a great load on her back, but trailing a huge log in one hand. A forcible example of the mighty power of mind over matter, but Aunt Anne would have no doubt said another example of French love of saving and parsimony.

It is certainly a strange feature in French peasant life, the way in which old people of both sexes continue to work on long after one would think they had earned their seat of rest by the fire, or on a garden bench in the sunshine. There is always the same invariable reason given. "One must work for the children." The children seem to be quite of the same mind, and in their turn will doubtless toil far harder at seventy and eighty than at thirty. French parents have not done with their children when they send them out into the world, and this is one great reason why, with the urgent desire of providing for their children, they take good care as a rule not to have more than they can manage. A large family means to them a burden more heavy than they could bear, for the English plan of rearing the children from hand to mouth, blissfully uncertain whether on the morrow there will be anything for the hand to put into the seven or ten hungry mouths, and taking the same amount of thought for the future as the sparrows overhead, is a solution of the

problem which never presents itself to the French mind.

* * * * *

Our last day in the forest was one in which I have to confess we broke all the canons of our greenwood life, and forfeited for ever the trust and goodwill we had hitherto been slowly earning from the rightful owners of the forest. True, we did not go so far as to sin against the noble king of the woods himself, nor against the feathered fraternity, except that is, by filling their peaceful domain with the ominous howling of dogs and sounding of horns, and their hearts with a sickening fear. It was the exciting *chasse à sanglier* which tempted us, the opening hunt of the season.

THE WILD
BOAR
HUNT.

Our friends at the château, where we were lunching the day before, insisted it was not a thing to miss. They were among the invited, so could take us, for it was a *chasse privée*, at which no one was supposed to assist without an invitation from the Master of the boarhounds, who had purchased the sole right to chase the wild boar for that year. The stag hunt, also put up to auction yearly by the Government, has for several seasons now been in the hands of another keen sportsman.

There was a great variety of opinion at the château as to the conveyances most suitable for this *chasse*. Only two of the men of the party were to be actually among the *chasseurs*, but everybody, including our hostess and her numerous guests, were bent on following.

After *déjeuner* we all went round to the stables to inspect the horses and carriages. Our host is justly proud of this department; never had horses a more luxurious home. Everything is done *à l'Anglaise*

A
HAUGHTY
BEAUTY.

even to the names of the horses and the nationality of the grooms. The stables were a model of freshness and order, each horse his coat like satin, his stall or loose-box like a drawing-room, with a neatly platted little border round the edge of the carpet of straw. Two most attractive and intelligent Egyptian donkeys occupying a loose-box at one end of the stables lifted up their voices for carrots, sugar, and other dainties, directly they heard the voice of their mistress. They were evidently a great source of annoyance to the beautiful and haughty lady who resided next to them. She lay back her high-bred ears and showed the whites of her scornful eyes; it required all her master's most flattering speeches to soothe her feelings.

"*Voyons donc, ma belle,*" he murmured, his arm round her neck, "thou and I we hunt the *sanglier* to-morrow—vex not thyself for that *canaille*, they remain at the house to draw the children about the garden! Such poor beasts are unworthy of thy notice." Thus petitioned, the haughty beauty relented, and presently condescended to eat the sugar offered her, and even to rub noses with her master.

From the stables we went to the coach-houses, and were introduced to the "Dragon Rouge," a splendid "Mercédés," the "Serin," a smart little yellow "de Dion Bouton," and the two chauffeurs, both Frenchmen.

"The Englishman he is admirable with the horse, but the Frenchman he understands best the machine," said our host. "For all that which concerns science, and requires precision, exactitude, the deft hand, give me the Frenchman; but for the horse who demands study of character, no one like the English groom, that

is to say, when he is a good boy and loves not too much the beer."

HABITS
OF THE
"SANG-
LIER."

Some of the party voted for the "Dragon Rouge," some for the victoria. One prudent lady, however, declared herself firmly for the coupé brougham. She was a dainty little person of pure Parisian breed, got up in an elaborately rustic costume that somehow suggested the absence of a shepherdess's crook and bunch of ribbons.

"I prefer to feel myself safely shielded from the tusks of the angry monster, see you," she said. "In a victoria nothing more likely than that the beast should refuge himself inside. Armand, *mon chéri*," she turned to her son, a young man of some five-and-twenty years, who had voted for the automobile, "thou wilt accompany me—I should have a crisis of the nerves if I knew thee in an exposed position."

Poor Armand protested that he would place himself behind the broad shield of his host's back, where surely the eye of no *sanglier* would detect him, but, in vain; this was no subject for joking, said his mother firmly.

She regarded me as little better than a lunatic for regretting my riding habit. "You do not realise, Mademoiselle, that a *sanglier* he is not of the disposition of the fox or the hare or even the deer—there is danger with that one, he has a bad character."

It was true I found it difficult to realise that a really serious form of hunting could take place in these beautiful well-kept civilised woods only an hour from Paris. A *sanglier*, I imagined, would resemble a Surrey stag who plays the same game over and over again till he dies of a green old age. It was with astonishment I learnt that on the last occasion of a *sanglier*

THE MEET. hunt, one of the boarhounds had been killed and half-a-dozen wounded by the same desperate fighter before he yielded his life.

Aunt Anne voted for the victoria, and I, since a horse without a habit was impossible, for my bicycle, in which I was seconded by another enthusiast for the free-wheel, a pleasant little Vicomte, the nephew of our host. He eagerly volunteered to escort me, saying he knew the forest like his own pocket.

"*Les bicyclettes!*" cried the rustic lady from Paris, "but that is much worse than a horse!" And all the party joined in a chorus of advice to the two rash cyclists to make their "testaments" before starting.

There was a thick, soft veil over everything the following morning, the first sign we had yet seen of a mist. It was no doubt a protest on the part of the forest, an effort to shield and protect her own greenwood children from the savage attacks of their enemy man, and his slave dogs. As the day advanced the sun pierced through and to a great extent dispersed the mist, leaving only a blue-grey distance, and a sort of gentle mystery around the trees.

The meet was fixed for between eleven and half past, at the "Belle Croix." Our friends with the "Dragon Rouge," the "Serin" for the two equestrians, whose horses had been sent on before, the victoria, the coupé, and bicycles, all came round to fetch us. Marlotte was greatly excited at sight of this *cortège*, and turned out to see us depart with cheers of encouragement.

I found myself provided with two cavaliers, for besides the little Vicomte, who knew the forest "like

his pocket," to my surprise, there was Monsieur Armand, son of the prudent lady, mounted on a free-wheel.

THE
GALLIC
TEMPERA-
MENT.

"I have persuaded *Maman* that nothing so safe as a *bicyclette*," said he; "for if one sees advancing a *sanglier* one has but to descend, see you, and mount a tree. Then with my revolver, which behold ready loaded, I shoot the beast. A famous idea, is it not?" he laughed. "And the poor little *Maman* she is quite consoled, for I have procured for her a charming cavalier who is enchanted to sit by her side in the *coupé* and make her compliments—the old Général de Soissons it is; with his leg of wood he holds not much to encounter the double danger of the automobile and the wild boar."

"Ah, the cunning one that thou art," said the Vicomte. "It will amuse me much to see thee climbing trees, but for the revolver I beg thee take it not—the lives of Mademoiselle and myself have a certain value, little though you may suspect it."

"Maurice, my friend, I can support much, but thou goest too far even for our friendship." His tone was dignified but pained. Another moment and I feared he might request the little Vicomte to bring a revolver, too, and that I might have to act as *témoin* to both. There is a beautiful uncertainty with the Gallic temperament as to where lies the border-line between jest and earnest. It is often overstepped in an instant and without the slightest warning. Happily the danger passed, and we were soon speeding smoothly along the splendid forest road in the wake of the "Dragon Rouge" and the "Serin," the rest of the procession far behind.

Round the "Belle Croix" a goodly number had

A TAPES-
TRY
SCENE.

already assembled, and down all the long avenues which radiate from this *point rond* of the forest more were arriving. Officers in various uniforms made bright patches of colour against the dark trees. The elegant "gilded youth" in long black frock-coats, white breeches, top-boots, white tie, and white gloves; the Master of the hunt and his friends in pink, with blue collars and cuffs, black velvet caps, and slung round each neck the big brass hunting horn, *la trompe*. There were no *amazones* of the party on this occasion, though the staghunt is often patronised by ladies. Many carriages joined us and several smart motors. Everyone seemed to know each other, and they laughed and chatted in a way to warn *sangliers* and *serfs* for miles round. Most of the riders arrived in coupés or motors, from which they emerged well wrapped up in fur-lined coats, their horses and grooms awaiting them at the *rendezvous*.

It was a scene which, but for the automobiles, reminded one of *la chasse* as depicted in the old tapestries at the Château of Fontainebleau, showing Louis XIV. and his courtiers and huntsmen assembled at one of these same "round points," the big cross of "Le Grand Veneur" or "Croix du Grand Maître" in the centre. For there were the *picqueurs* in the same scarlet coats and blue velvet caps, the same brass hunting horn coiled about their necks, and swords at their sides. There were also the big, strong boarhounds of the same breed as those of the Magnificent King, met together for the undoing, without a doubt, of a lineal descendant of the wild boar in the tapestry.

One of the *picqueurs* held a bunch of the hounds in leash. They, explained my escort, were the dogs who

would be first released to find the scent, blood-thirsty looking beast! I felt sorry for the poor *sanglier* and hoped he was sharpening up his tusches and would not be taken unawares.

MUSIC OF
"LA
CHASSE."

Before we started, up drove an ominous covered conveyance described by Monsieur Armand as "the hearse." It was a waggonette containing a large basket and drawn by a pair of depressed-looking horses.

After innumerable delays and false starts at last the pioneer dogs were loosed by the *picqueur* and we were off, soon scattered in every direction down the avenues and glades of the forest. The *picqueurs* on foot plunged into the thicket with the rest of the pack still held back, the mounted *picqueurs* and the Master took one road, while other huntsmen started down another. The hunting horn sounded now near, now far. The music of the *cor de chasse* is a regular language and a most complicated one to the uninitiated, but I was fortunate in having a companion who could interpret all the calls. "They are finding," he cried; then a moment later, "No, it was a false scent. Ha, they have started a stag—they call the hounds off." Again from another side of the wood came ringing notes with an echo of wild excitement—"À la bonne heure—they have found over in that direction—listen!"

We three cyclists wheeled round and darted down a narrow green glade, where several horsemen springing up from unexpected quarters quickly followed us, the motors and carriages keeping to the broad roads.

"The *sanglier* will cover an enormous area if he can only find thick cover," said the Vicomte; "he is not like the stag, who if possible keeps to the district he

AN ANTI-
SPORTS-
MAN.

knows well, and who circulates in a comparatively small circumference. Often he ends by taking to the water, the unhappy one, and there he is lost for sure—monsieur *sanglier* gives himself much more chance."

It was no empty boast on the part of the Vicomte that he knew the forest like his pocket. He knew not only every road, glade and point of view, but where the squirrels hid their nuts and where the birds had nests, which was not, as I had imagined, on the branches where occasionally we had the good fortune to hear one singing, but invariably on the outskirts of the forest. "They enter to find food," he said, "but they build never in the heart of the wood!" He could tell also the ways of the flowers and mosses and ferns. Very wise in woodland lore was the little Vicomte, and as great an enemy to *le sport*, though generally keeping his unpopular opinions very quiet, as Jean François Millet himself, who had no words to express his abhorrence of the disturbers of the sylvan peace and beauty which made such a joy in his life.

The Vicomte was delighted to find that my sympathies were all with the *sanglier* and my interest in *la chasse* purely pictorial. What I loved were the pink coats of the huntsmen, the gay uniforms of the officers, the smart, glossy horses curvetting round the old stone cross, with the background of pines and beech trees, and above all the shining coils of the big brass hunting horns and the picturesque music they made among the forest glades. He thought I was joking when I told him the only form of hunting I enjoyed was following the trail of the red herring, never having heard of it. His idea of the Englishman was, I discovered inferentially, that of a being but one

step higher in the scale than the *sanglier*, ranking at the best with his own British lion. Courageous, but imprudent, even to the verge of folly, brutal, and if the truth must be confessed, only partially civilised; dwelling in the northern latitudes of cold and damp, wrapped in a perpetual opaque fog; deaf and blind to the beauties of art, though with a sort of good-natured tolerance for those artists who visited his arctic clime. His only genius, *les affaires*—his damp country one big dreary workshop—his only pastime, *le sport*—namely, killing. It was, I could see, a new light on the character of this northern savage that he was content to enjoy *la chasse* for the mere love of exercise minus the shedding of innocent blood. Needless to say the little Vicomte had never crossed the Channel, and knew the Englishman chiefly as depicted in comic papers and burlesques before the *entente cordiale*.

THE
FRENCH-
MAN'S
ENGLISH-
MAN.

I also saw the Frenchman in a new light that day. Hitherto I had pictured him as somewhat of an amateur as regards real sport, loving all the paraphernalia and trappings of *le sport*, but content to slay tom-tits, and habitually shooting the fox. That *chasse au sanglier* opened my eyes.

In all our wanderings in the forest we had never seen sign of the wild boar, and even now with the hounds in full cry and the horns proclaiming his presence in joyous excited chorus, I was rather inclined to class him in the category of fauns, dragons and other bygone or fabulous persons. This delusion was also dispelled that day.

We had been skimming along peaceably for about an hour, sometimes close to the huntsmen and within sight of the hounds, but more intent on trying each

THE
MONSTER.

beguiling glade as it opened to right or left, than in keeping up our credit as keen votaries of *le sport*.

Suddenly Monsieur Armand, who had darted on ahead, gave a wild whoop and wheeled to one side. In the same moment, crashing through the cover, came a round, dark mass. For a second the Vicomte and I saw him splendidly as he crossed the narrow path between ourselves and our companions. He was far larger than the pig of India, with an enormous head and a most alarming flash of tushes. I realised there was some foundation for the wild excitement of the hounds. As for Monsieur Armand, he behaved in a manner to have alarmed even a less prudent mother than his own. Instead of climbing a tree as arranged, he sent a far-reaching call in the direction of the distant *picqueurs* and plunged recklessly into the thicket on foot after the boar. He even fired his famous revolver, but fortunately with no fatal result to the boar or anybody else, and without its being noticed.

In an astonishingly short time dogs and men were all about us, horsemen galloping up from every direction, carriages and motors tearing past in a long line on the nearest high road.

Monsieur Armand was quite a hero for the moment. He indicated the course of the boar, and remounting his bicycle, rode round by a short cut to the rocks of Franchard for which the wily boar had made. Here motors, carriages, and even bicycles were brought to a stand. Only the horsemen and *picqueurs* could follow the hounds, and that with difficulty. We lost sight of them entirely for a long time, hearing only the far distant calls of *la trompe* in widely different directions of the forest.

Slowly the mist again began to wrap us round with

its grey folds, adding a curiously supernatural touch to this tapestry hunting scene of the olden times. We seemed to be chasing a phantom boar with phantom dogs and huntsmen, so mysteriously they would suddenly flit into sight and as quickly merge into the shadowy trees.

A CRISIS
OF THE
NERVES.

We were just crossing the Gorge aux Loups in the wake of a small group of horsemen, when all at once we again saw the enormous black ball roll rapidly across our path. A few yards higher up a piercing shriek told us he had been seen on the road. We hastened back and discovered the coupé brought to a sudden standstill by the prudent lady inside. That flying vision of tushes and bristles had realised her worst terrors. It was in vain her son endeavoured to reassure her with the production of his new revolver and his noble flask of *eau-de-vie*. In vain that her gallant cavalier pressed her hand and urged alternately, "*Du courage, chère madame,*" and "*Calmez vous, mais calmez vous, chère dame,*" the latter in tones of frenzied agitation. Nothing was able to arrest the crisis of "nerves" which followed, and nothing would satisfy the distracted lady but a speedy return to the safety of the château with her son in her wake.

Armand's protestations fell on deaf ears, as also our chorus of reassurance that the *sanglier* was by this time probably at Bourron, possessed by a terror for the coupé far exceeding what the poor lady felt for his tushes.

"*Ah mon Dieu !* he was larger than a cow, the monster," she cried. "How thou hast deceived me, Armand, thou who didst swear him to be of the size only of a pumpkin. I shall see that beast till the day I die—his glaring eyes, his savage teeth—*mon Dieu, quel horreur !*"

THE "COUP
DE
GRACE."

With a "*Calme toi, ma pauvre mère, je viens,*" Armand, like the good French son he was, gave up his *chasse* and mounted his bicycle for the homeward route.

"And I, who had the intention of winning the tushes and presenting them to Mademoiselle," he sighed regretfully as we parted.

Up and down the forest did that black ball lead the dogs. At one time they started two *sangliers*, and the pack divided. Many of the carriages and motors began to disperse, on the mist becoming denser.

Aunt Anne, whose companions had deserted her for a returning motor, sat alone and alert in the victoria, determined to see the *chasse* to the end and to be in at the death if there was one. Her valiant spirit was rewarded. By a piece of good fortune, as she regarded it, she actually arrived first on the final scene, her coachman, a former *picqueur*, and well acquainted with the ways of *sangliers*, divining, as he said, by an inspiration the spot where the victim would be brought low.

It was on the route de la Haute-Borne that the gallant old fighter, wearied out at last, was run down and made his last desperate stand, killing outright two of the hounds, and goring badly some eight or ten others, before he was finally overpowered. The chief *picqueur* administered the *coup-de-grace*.

I did not witness that last grim scene, but I heard the dramatic music which accompanied it from *les trompes*, and the terribly suggestive yells and howls of the hounds. My cavalier and I agreed that this was more than enough to satisfy our tastes, and then and there sped back to Marlotte by the nearest route.

It was not until Aunt Anne returned triumphantly about an hour later and greeted me with her usual "Oh, my dear Felicity, I've had such a splendid

time," that I learnt that to her had been awarded the honours of the chase. "AU REVOIR."

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Shining with this unexpected glory fresh upon her, and a copy of the Fontainebleau paper in her pocket, giving a description of the *Chasse a Courre de l'equipe de Monsieur le Marquis de Carrabas* and of the *dame Anglaise* whose intrepid following was rewarded with the honours of the chase, we bade adieu to the forest next day, the boar's head to follow in due course ; and standing on the Dover steamer some hours later, breathed a heartfelt *au revoir* to Fair France.

THE END.



